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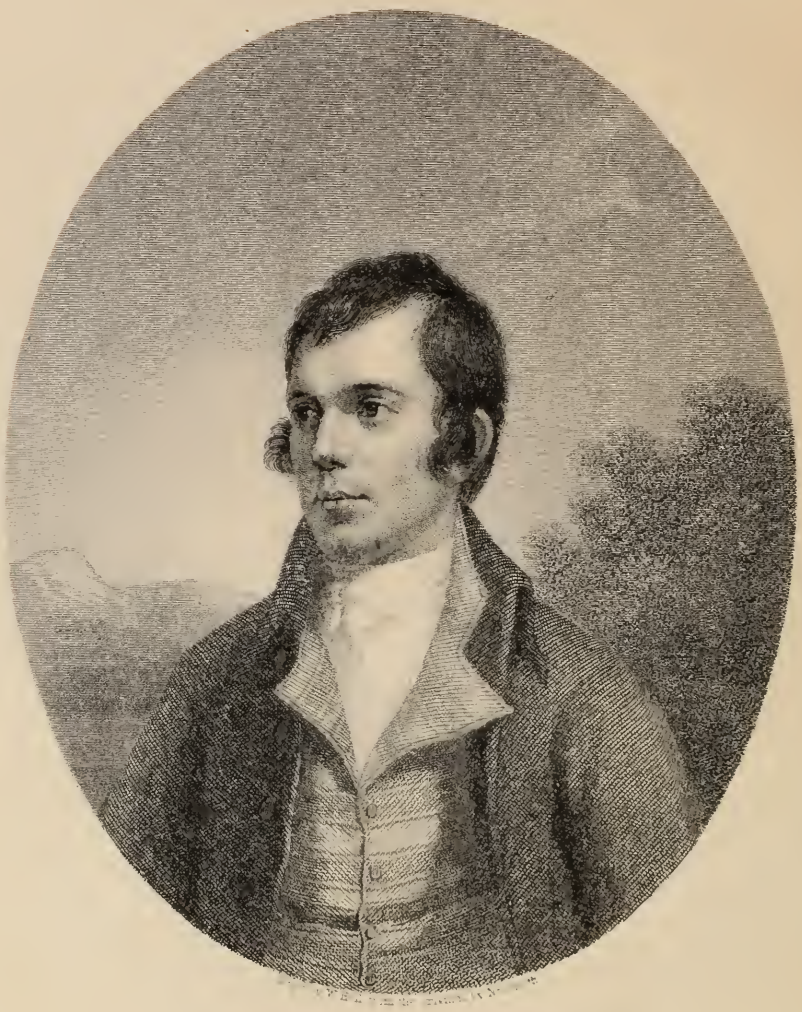

ROBERT BURNS

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THE

Burns, Robert

NATIONAL BURNS,

INCLUDING

THE AIRS OF ALL THE SONGS

IN THE STAFF AND TONIC SOL-FA NOTATIONS;

EDITED,

WITH AN ORIGINAL LIFE OF BURNS,

BY THE REV. GEORGE GILFILLAN.

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LONDON:
WILLIAM MACKENZIE, 69 LUDGATE HILL,
EDINBURGH AND GLASGOW.

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J Ramage

J Godfrey

THE BIRTHPLACE OF BURNS.

R P Brandard

DEATH AND DOCTOR HORNBOOK

"THEN MUSE-INSPIRIN' AQUA-VITÆ
SHALL MAKE US BAITH SAE BLYTHE AND WITTY"

ADDRESS TO THE DEIL

THE DEVIL'S PICTURD BEUKS

MAP OF THE
LAND OF BURNS
Miles
Irvine Bay
Lappock Rock & Beacon
Lady Isle Beacon
Heads of Ayr
IRVINE
KILMARNOCK
Dreghorn
Dundonald
Symington
TROON
Monkton
Prestwick
AYR
NEWTON ON AYR
New Prestwick
St Quivox
Tarbolton
Craigie
Riccarton
Hurlford
Crookedholm
Galston
Newmilns
Mauchline
Catrine
Stair
Ochiltree
Auchinleck
New Cumnock
Coylton
Dumfries
Loch Doon
Water of Fail
River Ayr
River Irvine
Water of Coyle
Water of Lugar
Water of Ochiltree
Water of Nith
Water of Deer
Water of Greenan
Water of Cessnock
Water of Cessnock
Water of Cessnock

CHAPTER I.

BURNS THE BOY.

THE title here proposed, while in one sense ideally appropriate, is in another as certainly a misnomer—the Life of Robert Burns. In one sense, Burns was the most intensely living man modern times have produced—had a perpetually active and seething brain; a heart beating in big and almost audible throbs; a "pulse's maddening play;" the most living and eloquent lips that ever spoke in Scotland; a hand that if you touched it threatened to *burn* your's: from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head he was a Man, and forms, thus, one of the best themes for biography. But, in another view, his life was so short, so fragmentary, so contradictory to itself, that the words, the Life of Robert Burns, sound like cruel irony—sad, shadowed, and incoherent as it was; and the feeling is not lessened, but increased, and the disturbance of the whole rendered more painful and mysterious, by the Arabesque border of wild happiness and lofty inspiration, too, by which it was begirt, but never either penetrated or pervaded. Besides the difficulties connected with such a strange, exceptional existence as was his, there meets us also on the threshold of our enterprise the fact that the tale of his life, with its union or disunion of elements, has been so often told, that it seems hopeless to seek to give it any new interest, or to draw from it any stronger moral than has been drawn. Nevertheless, we have decided to attempt it, and to do our best. Burns' life, said an accomplished gentleman to us the other day, must be written with the heart, and this qualification for writing it we unhesitatingly claim. We add, it should be written with determined honesty, and to that too we lay fearless claim.

Robert Burns was born on the 25th of January, 1759. His father was William Burns or Burness, a native of Kincardineshire, usually called the Mearns, westward from Glenbervie, which was the cradle of the Burness family. The country is called the *Howe* or Hollow of the Mearns, a fertile region lying low between two ridges of hills—the ridge of Garvock on the south side, and those of Strath-fenella or Strath-findlay and Auchcairnie on the north. Laurenceckirk, the birthplace of James Beattie, and connected with the memory of Lord Gardenstone and the still more famous Lord Monboddo, stands the centre or capital of this beautiful district. Eastward the ground rises, while it gets more bleak, and swells gradually into heights, partly arable and partly moorish; and among these heights is Glenbervie, from which farther on there is a deep and rapid descent toward Stonehaven and the sea. Burness, Burnes, and Burns, as the name is variously spelled, is derived from the Anglo Saxon Beorn, "a chief," with the affix *nes* for possession. The name De Burnes is found early in English records. The name of Brunhouse of Kair, in the county of Kincardine, appears as early as the reign of Robert the Bruce. In 1547 we find persons named Burnes renting the lands of Inchbreck, in the parish of Glenbervie. One of these, named William, took in Glenbervie a farm called Bogjorgan, where he died in 1715. Before his death he gave up the farm to his sons, William and James. After holding it some time at a joint lease James removed to Inches, a farm in the same county, while William remained in Bogjorgan. Robert Chambers gives a copy of the inventory of the homesteading at Bogjorgan a the time of the separation—a document remarkable among other things for spelling the name *Burnasse*. William Burness had a son (or, Dr. Rogers says, a brother), who settled in the farm of Brawlinmuir, Glenbervie. On one occasion he outwitted some caterans who were hovering in the neighbourhood, and who ultimately entered his

house to rob it, by concealing his money in the nave of an old wheel, which lay in the jaw-hole before the door as a kind of stepping-stone. One of his sons, Robert Burnes, rented the lands of Clochanhill, six miles west from Stonehaven, on the estate of Dunottar, which belonged to the Earl of Marischal. He had three sons, James, Robert, and William—1st, James, who went to Montrose, and became the father of the Writer there, who corresponded with the poet, and the great-grandfather of the famous Sir Alexander Burness of Bokhara and Cabul memory; 2nd, Robert, who left his father's house, as we will see immediately, at the same time with his brother, William, for England, remained there for a number of years, and died at Ellisland in 1789; and 3rd, William, the father of the Scottish Bard.*

Robert Burns himself fostered the belief (in which there is also some traditionary credence)—the wish being with him father to the thought—that some of his ancestors were "out" in the Rebellion. The author of the "Chevalier's Lament" and "Drummossie Muir" had a strong Jacobitical prejudice, mingling in his bosom with that patriot passion of which he speaks to Dr. Moore, and "which was to boil on in his bosom till the flood-gates of life were to shut in eternal rest;" and we might wish that it had been yet stronger, since in this case it might have inspired a hundred Jacobite melodies as good as those we now possess—better they could hardly be. Some of his remoter relations may have shared in the Rebellion of 1715-16; but his father was not born then, and procured ere he left his home a certificate that he had no part in the late "wicked rebellion."

William Burness and his elder brother, Robert, left Clochanhill together—driven southward by the same stress of poverty. Gilbert Burns tells us that they parted on the summit of a hill on the confines of their native place—very probably on the top of Garvock, with its wide view northward of the Howe of the Mearns, its fields of billowy grain, edged by a margin of blue hills soaring upwards to the loftier heights of Wirren, Caterthun, and Clochnaben; and southward of the ocean, with "ships dim-discovered dropping from the clouds" in the distance, and the coast from Bervie to Montrose and the Red Head stretching below. From this the coast road strikes away to Montrose, and thence to Edinburgh, *via* Dundee; while, on the other side, a road goes right through the Howe of the Mearns, by Brechin, to Perth, and thence to England. At this point the brothers had to part—the one going to Edinburgh, the other to England. And there would be here the elements of a tragedy, for both the men were of the blood of Burns; and with tears in their eyes, and anguish like despair in their hearts, they would tear themselves asunder—Robert, we suppose, remaining last on the hill, and watching his brother William slowly descending toward Den Fenella and St. Cyrus, and often turning back to the summit to take a last look—it is the last—of his younger brother. They never met again. William hied him to Edinburgh, and there, or in its immediate neighbourhood, procured some employment as a gardener, working and faring hard, and always contriving to save and send a little money home to Clochanhill to gladden the hearts of his aged parents. Once a bank note of some value arrived. They stared at it with astonishment. They had perhaps seen such a thing before only in the hands of haughty lairds or cruel factors, at an unapproachable distance. But now that it was theirs, as the schoolboy feels to his first shilling, they hardly know how to use it. Had the poet been there, he who wrote verses about a bank note and often on bank notes, might have inscribed a sonnet or a song on the "First Bank Note (and the Last) in Clochanhill."

From Edinburgh William Burness found his way to the West; but found it not, alas! more genial or hospitable than the East had been. He got a situation first under the laird of Fairlie, and then under Crawford of Doonside. He afterwards leased seven acres near the Bridge of Doon as nursery ground. Here he built the "auld clay biggin'" with his own hands, and on 15th December, 1757, brought home to it Agnes Brown, his young bride. The poet's mother was a comely person, with red hair, bordering on yellow, and with fine dark eyes, which she left, along with a poetic temperament, as a legacy to her son. She had been taught to read, but not to write. Her memory was stored with old ballads and songs, which she sang uncommonly well. She was of exceedingly active habits, of a cheerful disposition—a helpmeet to her husband and a kind mother to her children. Having been early left "a mitherless bairn"—sent out from her home to the care of a maternal grandmother, and afterwards mistrysted, as they say in Scotland, with a love affair—her career was to some extent prophetic of her son's. The low deal chair in which she nursed all her children is still preserved in Closeburn Hall, in Dumfriesshire, the seat of Sir James Menteith. William Burness was thirty-one years of age, and Agnes Brown twenty-six, when they were married. No epithalamium was sung at their nuptials, no marriage presents of value given to the young couple, although there would be the usual reels and rejoicings of a Scottish wedding; but here was a more memorable conjunction than Astronomy has ever recorded—rustic loveliness, sense, and sensibility in Agnes Brown, united to strong intellect, high moral principle, and indomitable perseverance in William Burness, recalling the fine words of Gerald Massey—

* See Dr. Rogers' excellent and most researching book on the "Genealogy of Burns," 1877.

"See Strength and Beauty, hand in hand,
Step forth into the golden land."

Alas! in this case, however, it was no golden land, only a humble house with a *but* and a *ben*, a hut, in which the boy Burns was to appear thirteen months afterwards; and beyond a piece of garden ground bordering on the sea, with the old road from Ayr to the south on its edge, a spot altogether consecrated to the genius of poverty and toil. But the "golden land" lay in their mutual love, and that was soon to be sealed by the birth of the most extraordinary man in native power and genius Scotland ever produced.

Thirteen months passed away in love and labour, the love sweetening the labour, the labour strengthening the love, till at last the consummation arrived. But Burns, who was not in the roll of common men, could not be like common men in the circumstances of his birth. No Owen Glendower prodigies, indeed, were to attend his arrival amongst us. It was fit that the handsel of Nature's great Scottish poet should be given by one of the genuine blasts of his own stormy sky. Not, indeed, on the 25th January, 1759, but some days afterwards (Gilbert Burns says, on the 3rd or 4th of February) came a loud tempest with lashing rains—

"That *day*, a child might understand,
The Deil had business on his hand."

But if his purpose was to destroy or drown his future bard and murderer (who, as Dr. Waddell intimates, scoffed him out of belief, if not of being), his purpose was foiled. True, the two jambs of the "auld clay biggin'" threw the gable off its centre, and it falling down got so shattered that it was thought necessary to carry the squalling poet through the storm to a neighbour's house, where he remained a week. The horoscope of the hapless Duke of Buckingham was thus read by Davy Ramsay ("Fortunes of Nigel")—

"Full moon and high sea,
Great man shalt thou be;
Red dawning, stormy sky,
Bloody death shalt thou die."

That of Burns, to a poetic augur vaticinating on the ground of this storm, might seem to portend wild tumult and skiey wrath, ending in safety, the poet triumphing over the tempest which sought his life, the storm of calumny, opposition, and passion subdued into peace. But, alas, No! *

Many years ago (in June, 1846) we visited the "auld clay biggin'," at that time (and we believe still) a hostelric for dispensing Burns' beloved beverage, and other good things of this life. We remember one rather odd circumstance: when looking at the concealed bed in which the poet was born, our companion (the gifted Rev. Dr. W. B. Robertson of Irvine, the orator and poet of the West) exclaimed, "Here 's a laddie, here 's wee Bobbie Burns!" A cry from the bed confirmed the words, and drawing near we tried to complete the *glamourie* of the scene by imagining that this boy who lifted up his arms and smiled was the inspired child to whose birthplace, in that humble cottage, the civilized world has flocked for well-nigh one hundred years. From the cottage we pursued the road along which Tam O' Shanter led his weird and tipsy gallop to Alloway Kirk (which seemed too small a stage for such a phantasmagoria as was transacted there, as though "Macbeth" were enacted in a barn-loft), but found metal more attractive in the grave-stone† erected by the poet to the memory of his parents, which, although not to weeping given, touched us to tears by the simple pathos of the story it tells of them, and the feeling it discovered in him. After this the elaborate monument on the Doon seemed an impertinence; but the haunted bridge restored and intensified the spirit of the spot, receiving and shedding down the magic light of the Past upon the stream, which combined music and legendary mystery in the murmur of its immemorial waters. How thankful we were from all we had heard of it, that we had not been present, as we once intended to have been, at the Burns' Festival in 1844. To-day there had been a partial disenchantment, then it had been total; and how terrible always is the fall of a long-cherished ideal to a young enthusiast!

Of the infant years of the poet we know little. The first glimpse we get of him is sitting at his father's fireside, listening to the ballads and stories of an old woman, one Betty Davidson, a relation of the family; and, as Wandering Willy says in "Redgauntlet," she had "some fearsome anes, that mak the auld carlines shake in the settle, and the bits o' weans skirl on their minnies out frae their beds." Her stories roused in Burns the sleeping elements of wonder and poetry, and probably fascination would sometimes overpower fear, and he would cry out in spirit with Outis in the "Odyssey," "More, give me more, it is divine!" He owns to the feeling continuing in after life; and if so, how strong it would be in early days. William Burness sent Robert in his sixth year to a little school at Alloway Mill, taught by one Campbell, who, however, soon migrated to a better place in Ayr, and William Burness united with some neighbours in employing a young man, named John Murdoch, as teacher to the children of several families. This worthy man taught Robert and his younger brother, Gilbert, English and English grammar, besides writing, and was much gratified by their proficiency. Murdoch lent him the "Life of

* See, in reference to Burns' Cottage, Appendix, No. I.

† "Grave-stone," see Appendix, No. II.

Hannibal," and two years after he got from a blacksmith who shod their horses the "Life of Sir William Wallace," which he read with the utmost avidity and with important results, for it poured into his veins that tide of Scottish prejudice of which he predicates, as we have seen, the life-long endurance.

In 1766 his father left his cottage at Alloway, and took the small farm of Mount Oliphant, two miles off. Robert, however, and Gilbert continued to attend Murdoch's school, till at the end of two years he removed to Carrick. It was on a parting visit of the excellent Dominie to the cottage that there occurred the famous scene at the reading of "Titus Andronicus," where the whole party were so much moved at some of the melodramatic horrors of the play that they were all dissolved in tears, and Robert threatened, if it were left in the house, to burn it. Dr. Currie it is, we think, who asks why this silly play is still bound up with the writings of Shakspeare? But although it is certainly far inferior to his usual mark, there are passages in it (witness Aaron's address to his black illegitimate child by the queen) which bear the stamp of Shakspeare. Schlegel remarks that Shakspeare alone was capable of producing either its beauties or faults, although Hazlitt thinks Marlowe, who was only a little lower than the Myriad-minded, might have written it. Perhaps Shakspeare added the better passages to the play, just as Burns himself often made an old, stupid, and scandalous ballad his own by inserting some stroke of consummate wit or genius. It is curious that Murdoch preferred Gilbert to Robert, and thought, because the former was the merrier of the two, that he was more likely to turn out a poet. Little did he see what a deep current of enthusiasm was running below, or knew what dark stern cogitations were saddening the brow of the wondrous boy, who already knew that he was a "poor man's son," and was already noted for a sturdy stubborn something in his disposition, for an "enthusiastic idiot piety," and whose mirth at all seasons of his life was only the silver lining on the cloud of the thickest melancholy!

From the date of Murdoch's departure William Burness undertook himself the charge of his children's education, and whiled away the heavy labours of the farm by conversing familiarly with them on useful subjects. He borrowed Salmon's Dictionary for them—made it their text-book in Geography; and instructed them in Natural History and Astronomy out of Derham's "Physico and Astro Theology" and Ray's "Wisdom of God in the Creation," a book once very popular, till supplanted by Paley's works, as these in their turn have been supplanted by the "Bridgewater Treatises"—very different fare from Thomas Boston's "Fourfold State," so strongly recommended (see the "Life of Thomas Davidson, the Scottish Probationer"), and with what slender results and left-handed gratitude to the gifted author of "Ariadne in Naxos." Burns, however, had read, and refers more than once to, honest Thomas' book; and whatever he might think of its religious theories, he no doubt did ample justice (as Carlyle also does) to Boston's excellent motives and thorough simplicity of character. Burns became acquainted, too, with Stackhouse's "History of the Bible" (afterwards edited by the venerable Bishop Gleig, of Stirling, father to the author of the "Subaltern" and the "Life of Warren Hastings"), and with a collection of letters by eminent writers, which became his standard and model for epistolary composition. When about thirteen or fourteen years of age, he and Gilbert were sent to the parish school of Dalrymple, three miles from their home, for a summer quarter, to improve their handwriting; and about this time Robert got hold of some of Richardson's, Fielding's, Smollett's, Hume's, and Robertson's works. Shortly after, his old master, Murdoch, was appointed English teacher in Ayr; and resuming his acquaintance with the Mount Oliphant family, he lent Robert Pope's works, and took him, at his father's desire, to Ayr to assist him in revising his grammar and learning a little French. Burns was advised to begin Latin, too; but proceeded only a short way in that study—not farther, he used to say waggishly, than to understand the words, *Amor vincit omnia*, although he resumed it occasionally afterwards; and whenever any reverse of fortune or disappointment befell him, he was wont to hum, "But I'll to my Latin again," as he snatched up Ruddiman. Some of his biographers have regretted that, along with the Bible and the ballads of Scotland, Burns had so much intercourse at this time with "shallow, sharp, and polished writers, like Pope, Addison, Swift, and Steele, with their stilted stops and methodical periods." In this slump judgment we do not agree. These writers alone might have been bad models; but united to others of a loftier mood, they materially assisted the education of his taste, and aided him in acquiring such a comparatively correct prose style as his letters exemplify. They gave him the *form;* his own genius supplied the *fire*. They helped him, as ruled paper helps a beginner in the art of writing. Nor can we coincide with this estimate of the authors referred to. Surely Addison is one of the sweetest and most natural writers in the language. We knew a very clever and scholarly man who used to say that he would rather have written the "Vision of Mirza" than all Byron's poetry; and Burns himself speaks of his early delight in perusing that exquisite allegory. Pope, according to Sir Walter Scott, was a "Deacon in his trade"—the finest of artists, and not the least gifted of poets, although too often, as his defender Lewes has it*—

* "Lewes" (see Boswell's "Johnson"), author of some noble stanzas about Pope, much prized by Dr. Johnson.

"Malice, Pope, denies thy page
Its own celestial fire;
While critics and while bards in rage,
Admiring, won't admire."

And to call Swift—the masculine, the ingenious, the sensible, the master of strong, simple, sinewy English, the greatest satirist of his age, the wittiest man in the wittiest nation of the world, and if you will, the ablest libeller of human nature that ever lived—"shallow," is to betray a narrowness of judgment and a want of appreciation of one of the giants of British literature as strong and as unique, in his *own style*, as Shakspeare or Milton. Apart from what Burns derived from the wits of Queen Anne (we will show by and by it was not unmixed good) and the poets of the Elizabethan period (the latter very imperfectly known to him), he must have reaped a great deal of advantage from such master novelists as Richardson, Fielding and Smollett; and such historians as Hume and Robertson. The one class tended to educate his feelings and develop his dramatic power, a power he possessed in a great measure, and often used, though he never wrote a play; and the second, to enlarge his views and to strengthen his understanding. Burns read, Gilbert tells us, two volumes of "Pamela," a novel which, from its subject and its heart-rending pathos, must have been peculiarly suggestive to him at this period of his life.

At Ayr Burns continued three weeks in Murdoch's house, diligently employed in learning French. Murdoch in a long letter gives an interesting account of this visit, which was terminated by the coming on of harvest, at which Burns, who at fifteen did the full work of a man, could not be spared. The most notable thing in this letter is its panegyric on William Burness, who seems to have been one of Nature's uncrowned nobility—a man almost perfect—not of that kind of virtue either which must be taken for granted, but which was tested by every kind of severe suffering, except that of remorse for gifts misused, opportunities neglected, and errors committed. That was the lot of his son; but ere we place him hopelessly beneath his father, let us remember that no meteor rays streamed before the parent's eyes, no passions hot as those of a hundred hearts beat in his bosom. Robert Burns did, at all events, to his father what no Murdoch or Gilbert Burns could have done for him, he repaid the gift of life with immortality. It was of his father he said—

"Then kneeling down to Heaven's Eternal King,
The priest, the father, and the husband prays."

Before closing this chapter we may merely pursue for a moment the fate of John Murdoch, the excellent preceptor of the poet. After Burns left for the harvest rigg Murdoch often visited him at his father's house, and helped him with his learning. He continued for some years a respected citizen and teacher in Ayr, till a quarrel in his cups with Dr. Dalrymple, the all-powerful parish minister there, forced him to migrate to London, where he became a private teacher of French, and wrote some books on the French language—such as, "A Radical Vocabulary of the French Language," "On the Pronunciation and Orthography of the French Language," a "Dictionary of Distinctions." He also rendered valuable assistance to Walker when preparing his excellent "English Dictionary." He heard in the midst of the mighty London of the fame of his pupil, and could scarcely for a while believe that this prodigy of genius had ever walked by his side along the whitening ridges of Mount Oliphant, or lain in bed with him conjugating French verbs! He soon warmly welcomed his rise, but never seems to have thought of comparing him for a moment with his father. Murdoch's connection, however, with Burns was of service to him in his declining years. Although he had taught English to many distinguished persons in London, such as Talleyrand, he fell into poverty and ill-health. An appeal was made on his behalf to the friends and admirers of Burns, who raised some money to relieve his wants. He died in 1824, aged seventy-seven, having survived for twenty-eight years his excitable and ill-starred scholar.

CHAPTER II.

BURNS THE YOUTH.

THUS for eighteen years had the life of the boy Burns sped away. Working in the harvest field like a Titanic slave, and spending his evenings after his own heart; his summer nights in wandering through the country by haunted stream or sounding ocean, a book often in his hand; his winter nights in devouring Stackhouse, Smollett, and Robertson; his Sabbaths in listening to Dr. Dalrymple, or some nearer Presbyterian oracle; and his private hours, by night or day, in thoughts too deep for tears, in communings with his own hungry heart, in conjectures on his future destiny, as yet unblest by any delightful "Vision," and in melancholy reflections on man and the world. He was little regarded by anybody, unless indeed by his father, who always saw in Robert the promise of an extraordinary man. He speaks of the cheerless gloom of a hermit, and the unceasing toil of a galley slave, as comprising his whole existence up to his sixteenth year. Yet, we doubt not, he was then often happy, happier than in after days, and that for two good reasons—first, he was young, and the basis of youth is Hope; and, secondly, he was virtuous, and the usual attendant of virtue is Peace.

One cause of his sufferings was their poor farm. Mount Oliphant resembled Rip Van Winkle's farm; it was "the most pestilent piece of ground in the whole country," and Gilbert Burns tells us it continued unimproved and unimprovable, and notwithstanding the extraordinary rise in the value of land in Scotland about the time he wrote, let at £5 lower than the rent paid for it by his father thirty years before! The family laboured very hard, and fared very poorly—never for years tasting butcher's meat, and working themselves without any servant. Robert began to feel those fits of deep depression which never altogether left him, and in the evenings was often afflicted with a dull headache, exchanged afterwards for a palpitation of the heart, and a threatening of fainting and suffocation in his bed in the nighttime, which made him sometimes arise and plunge himself into a tub of water which stood in the room.

At Whitsunday, 1777, the family left Mount Oliphant for Lochlea (pronounced *Lochly*), in the parish of Tarbolton. This farm lay on a rising ground to the north of the Ayr, was bleak and uninteresting in aspect, but from some of its braes commanded a fine view of the Carrick hills on the left, and of Arran and the other islands of the Frith of Clyde on the right; of Ailsa Craig too, that "craggy ocean pyramid" which Keats has sung. Burns must, from this and many other points, have often seen these striking objects; but it is curious how seldom he alludes to them in his poems, only once, we think, to Ailsa—

"Meg was deaf as Ailsa Craig"—

and never, so far as we remember, to the dark mass of mountains rising to the west, and known now to travellers from every part of the globe as the hills of Arran.* How often must he have seen the sun going down in gold or blood behind these black battlements; Jove pausing ere he dipped his orb, so beautiful and large, in the sea beyond them, and his own beloved Venus trembling as it shone a bulb of light in the orange sky of evening above them! But of all this his poetry, so full of allusions to the simpler features of Ayrshire scenery—her "burn stealing under the lang yellow broom," her "milk-white thorn that scents the evening gale," her Doon with her "far-fetch'd floods," and her moors "red-brown wi' heather bells"—is entirely silent. Nor do twenty lines in all his works attest any interest in or admiration of mountain scenery, and his verses on the "Fall of Foyers" and "Taymouth" are miserably poor, and like his Doon floods "far-fetch'd." His contemporary, Cowper, yearned for mountains, but never expected to see them, unless he saw them in Heaven, and that to him, poor fellow, seemed a doubtful prospect; but Burns saw them every day from his plough, gave them his admiration doubtless, for he had a strong sense of the picturesque and sublime, but preferred to sing the "Braes of Ballochmyle" and the "Castle of Montgomery," nay, the "Mouse" running away from his ploughshare, and the "Daisy" crushed below it.

William Burness took his farm at Lochlea, of one hundred and twenty acres, at twenty shillings an acre, which Robert Chambers thinks a high rent for these days.

* Alexander Smith, whose "Life of Burns" we did not read till after writing this portion of our own, alludes, we observe, to this.

Nevertheless, matters at first rather prospered here with the Burns family. They stood, as the Highlanders phrase it, "shouther to shouther," and worked efficiently and well together — a family of poverty and "industrious peace." At this time a rather important event took place in the poet's history. His mother, originally from Craigeston, in the parish of Kirkoswald, had a brother living at the farm of Ballochneil, about a mile from the village of Kirkoswald—Samuel Brown by name, at once a farm labourer, fisherman, and dealer in wool. Burns resided with his uncle in a farm house which he occupied along with his brother-in-law, Niven, the farmer, his own wife being dead; and walked every morning to the village school at Kirkoswald. The coast of Carrick, near this, is the commencement of a long line of sea margin, extending by various reaches and windings from Ayr to Girvan, and thence to Stranraer, and thence to Wigton, and thence to that romantic region below Creetown, called usually Guy Mannering's country. Carrick, though far away from this, may be said to begin the waving line which, after many bendings, culminates in one of the most interesting spots in all the south of Scotland, both in itself and its associations. One rugged band then united all this tract of sea coast. It was, from Kirkoswald to Kirkcudbright, the haunt of a smuggling population; the Isle of Man forming a midway station between it and France, Ostend, and Gottenburg. We must not judge, however, of the Kirkoswald smuggler by Vanbeest Brown, *senior*, or Dirk Hatteraick. He was half smuggler, half farmer, jolly, kindly, though somewhat rude and riotous. Burns' uncle, Brown, belonged apparently to this type. The coast extends for many miles, and is backed by bare though green hills or uplands, surmounted at one place by the point on which formerly stood the Castle of Turnberry, famous in the history of Robert the Bruce, where the hero of Bannockburn "shook his Carrick spear." The village of Kirkoswald stands a mile or two inwards, in a sequestered nook. It was altogether a spot admirably adapted for the training of a young poet, and the four months spent by Burns here form one of the most pleasing and pregnant episodes in his early history. It is true, he tells us, that he learned "now to fill his glass and to mix without fear in a drunken squabble," which, by the way, shows that he had been habitually temperate before. But he here got acquainted with wild men and wild usages, saw wild scenery, bathed his young system and his soul, too, in the salt breath of the ocean, and met the first rough model of his inimitable "Tam o' Shanter." This was one (of whom more afterwards) Douglas Graham, whose farm of Shanter (its steading is now down, and its identity is somewhat indistinct, the farm having been divided into two) lay on a slope near the site of Turnberry Castle, and who was a good decent man to be a habitual smuggler and occasionally a hard drinker, and whose wife, Helen MacTaggart, was as fearful and superstitious as the Kate of the poem.

Hugh Rogers, who taught Burns mensuration and geometry, was an eminent teacher, and distinguished also as a land-surveyor—narrow, however, in his views; and this led him into certain disputes with his distinguished pupil, in which, as might have been expected, the Dominie came off second best. Unluckily, on one occasion, Rogers committed himself to a public discussion before his school, about the comparative value to society of a general and a merchant, with Burns, and was completely discomfited, to his own confusion, the satisfaction of his opponent, and the uproarious delight of the scholars. Burns' great associate at the time was John Niven, afterwards of Kilbride, a very successful man in business, and ultimately a land proprietor. On one occasion they treated their teacher to a jug of ale in an inn kept by two gentlewomen, Jean and Ann Kennedy, the former of whom figures in "Tam o' Shanter" as Kirkton Jean—

"Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday."

Their house was a respectable one of its sort, and called usually "The Ladies' or Leddies' House."* Niven hailed from Maybole, and when he returned there from school on the Saturdays, these precious breathing times to scholars, Burns accompanied him, and their talk to and fro was of an elevating and inspiring character. First in his studies, first in debate with his teacher, first in his talk with his school companions, Burns was not first in manly exercises, such as putting the stone, wrestling, and leaping, although in these, too, he excelled. But here Niven was his Evil Genius, and always triumphed. Burns found his revenge, however, in drawing his successful rival into an argument about some speculative point, in which he generally regained his laurels.

And now he fell in love in a characteristic fashion. The original school at Kirkoswald was destroyed, and for it was substituted a room opposite the churchyard. Behind this room, on a high slope, was a succession of "kail-yards" attached to various cottages. Across this unromantic locality there shot a vision of female beauty, which quite dazzled the eye of Burns. He had gone out to take the altitude of the sun—fit employment for a young poet! But a star came between him and old Sol. Sines and cosines, quadrants and parallaxes, were alike confounded and put to flight when Peggy Thomson, daughter of a neighbouring cottager, came out to the garden, according to one of his biographers, not to gather flowers, but to cut down a cabbage for the family dinner! This, he says, completely overset his trigonometry. *Amor vincit omnia* became his motto. To see Peggy, to steal out and court

* See Note on "Tam o' Shanter" in Poems.

Peggy, and ultimately to vent his feelings on Peggy in song, was henceforth his care till he left Kirkoswald. He renewed his acquaintance with her temporarily afterwards; but her image left little permanent effect on his mind.

Chambers tells the following anecdote about Burns when he resided at Kirkoswald:—One day, as he was walking slowly along the street of the village in a manner customary to him, with his eyes bent upon the ground, he was met by the Misses Biggar, the daughters of the pastor of the parish. He would have passed without noticing them, if one of the young ladies had not called him by name. She then rallied him on his inattention to the fair sex, in preferring to look to the inanimate ground, instead of seizing the opportunity afforded him of indulging in the most invaluable privilege of man—that of beholding and conversing with the ladies. "Madam," said he, "it is a natural and right thing for man to contemplate the ground from which *he* was taken, and for woman to look upon and observe man from whom *she* was taken." This, adds Chambers, was a conceit; but it was the conceit of no "vulgar boy." It was not, however, original with Burns. A respected correspondent, John Cuthbertson, Esq., formerly the able English master of the High School, Dundee, now residing near Troon, Ayrshire, writes us as follows:—"There was an edition of L'Estrange's 'Ruins of Quevedo' published in Glasgow in 1753. It is coarsely printed on coarse paper, and must have been sold for a price not exceeding sixpence. At page 24 a young woman is represented as saying to a duenna who had admonished her, 'Let the men look downwards toward the clay of which they are made; but man was our original, and it well becomes us to keep our eyes upon the matter from which we came.'" He adds, "If Burns had got the idea from Quevedo, he must have read at least one book more than the list given by Chambers contains, and I believe he had perused dozens more. Burns, if he ever used the words, which I doubt, might have got them from this Glasgow translation."

He returned home from this visit, he tells us, very considerably improved. Some think that it was at this period that he composed his song, "I Dreamed I Lay where Flowers were Springing," some of the lines in which bear a resemblance to Mrs. Cockburn's "Flowers of the Forest." Chambers says that his lines on "Peggy Thomson" were not written till he renewed his acquaintance with her, years after he had seen her at Kirkoswald. Burns tells us that, while in Carrick, he read Thomson's and Shenstone's works for the first time. Even the languid sentimentalism of Shenstone found some reflection in his inflammable bosom, as his "Vision" proves; but how much more must he have sympathized with the solemn grandeur, the difficult swell, like that of a labouring sea, the natural piety, the genuine enthusiasm, the sudden and savage dash of some of the pictorial touches, like the style of Salvator Rosa, and what he calls the "landscape glow" of the great author of the "Seasons," on the crowning of whose bust he was afterwards to indite a poem! He commenced, immediately after leaving Carrick, a habit of letter-writing, which led by and by, through much practice, to excellence; his correspondence being, if not his highest, yet one of his distinct and undeniable claims to enduring fame. He began by studying and imitating the letters of the "Wits of Queen Anne," a collection of which he had procured; but soon (as Wordsworth says of the Sonnet) in his hands "the thing became a trumpet," and some of Burns' letters are among the most eloquent ever penned. Once engaged in letter-writing, he found it a fascination. "Though he had not three farthings' worth of business in the world, every post brought him as many letters as if he had been a broad plodding son of daybook and ledger." He read also at this time "Tristram Shandy" and the "Man of Feeling" with special delight—the one for its riotous oddity, wild humour, and touches of Shakspearean tenderness; the other for its delicate vein of pathos and charming style. Often, too, he took up the lyre, and swept the chords with energy; but his full mastery over it was not yet attained.

His career at Lochlea was for some years uneventful. The Burns family was all that time a virtuous household, though exceeding poor; hard-wrought, but contented; singularly self-contained, and mingling little with their neighbours; distinguished by a certain superiority of manners and refinement of taste, and sure to be found, all of them, at meal times reading while consuming their victuals. Such families were once not uncommon in Scotland, and even still, in hamlets among the hills or in lonely country-sides, a few may be found. We fancy a kind of *hauteur* and reserve in their manners, as of a family dwelling alone, and not reckoned among the common herd; and this certainly characterized Robert Burns himself. He was as proud as Lucifer, or rather (to imitate a witticism of De Quincey) Lucifer was as proud as Burns.

Up to his visit to Irvine in his twenty-third year, Burns seems to have been one of the brightest, funniest, happiest, and most virtuous of young men. Gilbert went with him to the peat-moss, and he seemed to set it on fire by the quick, lightning-like play of his raillery and thick-coming fancies. His audience then was rather few than fit, consisting of some farm servants engaged at their laborious employment of delving, wheeling, and stacking peats under a burning summer sun; but soon their sides were sorer than their limbs, and more wearied, while the peasant youth was darting up from among the hags the flashes of his eye and the coruscations of his wit and genius. An old man near Catrine used often to tell our excellent friend, Dr. Hamilton MacGill, foreign secretary

to the United Presbyterian Church, that he remembered a string of carts going to a quarry for lime, all of them abandoned by their drivers, who had gathered round the cart of Burns, who, by shooting round shafts of fun, was exciting screams and shouts of laughter, while some of the weaker recipients, we venture to say, were rolling helpless on the ground. It was, we think, the same man who, when a boy, saw Robert and Gilbert digging a lint hole. "What are you doing there?" said he. "Making a grave for the *Deil*," replied Robert. "*Catch him first*," cried the boy, on which the poet exploded in convulsions of laughter. The mention of the Deil always tickled rather than terrified the author of the "Address."

The other members of the family of Lochlea were not destitute of literary aspirations. Agnes, while milking the cows with her two sisters, would repeat the old Scottish songs she had picked up—the "Flowers of the Forest" (in the first form of that plaintive ditty), "Sir James the Rose," and some of the versions of the Psalms, specially the 145th in our Scottish collection. Gilbert Burns was a man of reading, and, for the time, of cultivated understanding, although that exuberance of spirits attributed to him in early days by Murdoch seems to have departed and gone over to his elder brother, who at this time of his life was of a most joyous and indulgent temper. Gilbert was in the harvest field a sullen, stern task-master; but when he spoke harshly to any of his young labourers, Robert would take their part, and cry, "Oh, man, ye're no for young folk." Nor can we wonder though the author of "The Winter Night" should think with pity on those "poor dumb mouths," the "owrie cattle," the robin red-breast, friend and bewildered guest of man, the "silly sheep" and "ilk happing bird, wee helpless thing;" and never did poet, unless we except William Cowper or Professor Wilson, exhibit more sympathy, whether in his song or in himself, with "the creation made subject to vanity, and groaning and travailing in pain together until now." And it is hinted that the crushed and trampled ones knew their benefactor—knew the man who, in the "Twa Dogs," had sounded their very souls (if souls they have), had gauged their sufferings, and had shared in their gladness, when, at the sight of "the innocent wee things" in the cottage at play—

> "They for joy had barkit wi' them."

It was altogether a happy home that of Lochlea. Poverty might be looking in at the window, but had not yet entered the house. The excellent father was yet strong to labour, as well as wise to advise. And the hot passions of the eldest son, which were to form such an element of disturbance to himself and his friends, still slumbered like morning clouds, which look calm and bright till—

> "Slowly charged with thunder they convey
> Terror to earth and tempest to the air."

And it is to the period of his life now at hand that we would specially apply the lines of Wordsworth—

> "Of him that walked in glory and in joy,
> Behind his plough upon the mountain side."

In our next Chapter we will look at him as developed into the Ploughman Poet. But although advancing to this stage he got more fame, we suspect his pleasures were hardly so pure and simple as they had been in Lochlea. The cause of this will presently appear.

CHAPTER III.

BURNS THE PLOUGHMAN-POET.

BEFORE settling down as a farmer, Burns' fancy was crossed by a new ambition, which promised to alter his entire scheme of life, and which might have led him to fortune and forgetfulness! Feeling that the outlook of a poor plough-boy was but a gloomy one; aware that, as he tells Dr. Moore, the only two openings by which he could enter the Temple of Fortune were the gate of niggardly economy, and the path of little chicaning bargain-making, both of which he detested—the one as narrow, the other as contaminated; and having a desire, besides, to marry (Ellison Begbie is supposed at that time to have been his flame, who afterwards jilted him)—he turned his attention to flax-dressing, in which he had tried some experiments along with Gilbert at Lochlea, and removed to Irvine to set up his trade. Irvine, now a thriving seaport, was then the emporium of the flax-dressing trade, generally in connection with farms on which the material was raised. Here Burns became connected with a man named Peacock, whom the poet, in a passage of his letters which has not been printed, has strongly denounced. He possibly had cheated Burns while teaching him his calling. The cottage where he plied his trade stood on the Smiddy Green, one end being devoted to the work, the other employed by an individual in keeping workhorses. Flax-dressers, or hecklers, as they were often called, have been in Scotland a superior, though peculiar class of men. In the town where we now write (Dundee), they were, we have heard, in the first half of the century, noted for their knowledge, irregular diligence, occasional *bouts* of dissipation, great interest in politics, and expertness in political discussion. The most powerful speakers who, at the time of George Kinloch's banishment, stirred the fierce democracy of Dundee, were hecklers. Their manners, however, and their habits, were often coarse. We suspect that Burns in Irvine was thrown among a similar class, and his very superiority led him into snares. He was noted for his powers of conversation. But the inspired heckler found rough and ready logic more popular than poetical talk. Little else, we believe, is remembered of him in Irvine than his melancholy. The uncongenial and unsuccessful trade, the rude society the scoundrel partner, his distance from home, and, it may be, a certain looseness of habits here acquired, reacted violently on his spirits, and made the brightest man in the west of Scotland for a year a gloomy hypochondriac. Yet one precious fruit grew on, and has fallen to us from the baleful tree—we refer to the beautiful letter to his father, dated December 27, 1781. This itself seems to cast doubt on the insinuation Professor Walker throws out on the authority of somebody, who boasted that he had taught Burns looser ideas of religion in Irvine. The expression is of course very vague; but if the opinions taught him were really loose, and not simply somewhat bolder than his former sentiments, they do not seem to have rooted themselves very deeply. The heart, at least, of the author of that noble letter was right, and—

> "The heart aye's the part, aye,
> That keeps us richt or wrang."

Yet temptation seems to have attacked him in Irvine from another direction. Here he met with one Richard Brown (afterwards, we have been assured by persons who knew him, a very respectable man and citizen), who had been at sea, and talked of illicit love with the levity of a sailor, although Brown was wont to say that Burns had nothing to learn on that subject when they got acquainted. This must refer to his Irvine experience, since we have Gilbert Burns' testimony and his own that his life in Lochlea was pure. An account of Brown's romantic history and his influence on Burns' mind may be read in the poet's famous letter to Dr. Moore. We find him writing to Brown afterwards with great affection. Burns seems seldom, if ever, to have lost a friend. He "grappled them to his heart with hooks of steel." He had a high theoretical idea of the value of friendship; and practically his friendships were about as strong as his loves, and considerably less fickle. "The lover and the friend" nc invariably classes together. Brown had a taste in other directions than the fair sex. He liked poetry, and Burns alludes in one of his letters to a Sabbath day they passed in Eglinton woods, then, as now, very beautiful and umbrageous, when Brown urged Burns to send some verses he repeated to a magazine—a hint which flattered Burns' vanity, although he did not act on it.

Burns, we saw, had written the plaintive letter to his father on the 27th December, 1781. We find him with characteristic volatility welcoming in the New Year on the 1st of January, 1782, in a carousal so prolonged and excessive, that during it his flax shop took fire, was burned to ashes, and himself left, "like a true poet, without a farthing." He did not, however, return to Lochlea till March, as is proved by his sister's statement and by his initials inscribed by himself, with the date (1782), on the chimney-piece of the little garret where he slept.

The gloom which had cast its shadow over Burns' later days at Irvine came home with him, although it seems gradually to have yielded to various influences—to the summer weather which began, to his resumption with redoubled energy of his labours in the field, to the counsel and company of his father, and to the happy fraternal influence of Gilbert. Whatever might have been his habits in Irvine, and although changed perhaps in tastes, he resumed in Lochlea the same hard-faring and temperate life as before. He engaged, however, as we shall see, in some love affairs, although none of much consequence. He attended, as he had done once before, a dancing school. He began in rivalship with David Sillar (his "Davie"), who was a very respectable poetaster and a "prime fiddler," to practise the violin—sometimes on a bad day, when he was unable to work in the fields, and sometimes early in the morning, when he would break up the kitchen *gathering coal*, and alarm the family by his untimely scrapings. Fiddling is not a very common accomplishment, we think, of poets. Dr. Croly, indeed, according to Barry Cornwall, was a good violinist, although in his later days, when we knew him, he had resigned the practice as unsuitable to his years, if not to his profession. Burns never succeeded in it, nor in the German flute, and his voice was tuneless and rough as a boar's; yet he could read music, and was keenly susceptible, need we say? to the charms of song. But his chief employment now was the plough, and his chief relaxation and solace was poetry —and lo! the Ploughman Poet! He restrung, he tells us, his lyre with renewed vigour.

Six or seven years before this he had written, as we have seen, his pretty "I dreamed I lay where flowers were springing." He tells us he had even sketched the plan of a Tragedy, and has retained one speech from it; supposed to have been spoken by a great oppressor, by whom he meant the factor who had ground down his father for his arrears at Mount Oliphant. It reads rather like a bit of Young's "Revenge" than of Shakspeare. Afterwards he is said to have composed a song on every tolerably looking girl in the parish, and finally, one in which they were all included. Such ditties he usually destroyed. A beautiful one has survived—"My Nannie, O," and it is certainly one of the sweetest and tenderest of all his strains. The river of the song, beyond which were the Carrick hills, visible from Lochlea, was the Stinchar or Stinsiar, for which he afterwards substituted, as a more euphonious title, the Lugar, a stream which belonged to a different district. At this our friend, the late excellent David Jamieson, U.P. minister in Kilmarnock, was very angry, and has justly abused Burns and Burns' editors for it in his volume of poems, "Scenes of Youth." Nannie was one Agnes Fleming, in Tarbolton parish, a farmer's daughter and a servant, of no special attractions, and who knew Burns very slightly—only, indeed, so far that he once told her he had written a "sang" on her. It is interesting to know that his father lived to see and to be much gratified by this song, which is indeed pure as the "opening gowan wat wi' dew." It was followed by his scornful ditty, "O Tibby, I hae seen the day," inscribed to a proud minx named Isabella Steven or Stein. There were some other love strains, which may be more appropriately treated when we come to the list of his early loves in the next chapter. His gloomy state of mind at Irvine inspired the copy of verses called "Winter," with the two lines so affecting in their simplicity of bitterness—

> "The leafless trees my fancy please,
> Their fate resembles mine."

also his "Prayer Written under the pressure of Violent Anguish." He had flung off this untimely load ere he struck up the cheerful strain—

> "My father was a farmer upon the Carrick border,"

which, though written in a ranting style, is a piece of real genius. Many of his poems were composed at the plough—notably, "Poor Mailie." Burns had bought a ewe and two lambs, and the ewe was tethered in a field adjoining the house of Lochlea. He and Gilbert were going out with their team, when Hugh Wilson, a curious, awkward-looking boy, clad in plaiding, came, with much anxiety in his face, to tell that the ewe had entangled herself in the tether, and was lying in the ditch. Robert caught up the humour in Hughoe's look and the pathos in Mailie's position at once; and after relieving the ewe, went, with eyes sparkling, to the plough, composed the poem there, and repeated it to his brother in the evening. To those who remember their own boyhood, and what a Scotch boy especially is, the best touch in all this simple and quaint effusion lies in the words—

> "Now, honest Hughoe, dinna fail
> To tell my master a' my tale;
> And bid him burn his cursed tether,
> And for my sake thou's get my blether."

To the same period (founded partly on a black-letter English ballad) belongs "John Barleycorn," as spirited an

Anacreontic as ever flowed from the lyre of the Teian Bard, of Herrick, Tom Moore, Byron, or Lytton Bulwer, whose exquisite song in the "Last Days of Pompeii" has seldom been equalled;* and the rest of the Bacchanalian brotherhood. Yet Burns, when he wrote it, was habitually a water drinker; when he did drink, it was in great moderation, and his whole expenditure on himself was £7 per annum.

"Ye generous Britons, venerate the plough," cries Thomson; and Burns, since Thomson's day, has supplied a new reason for obeying the command. Since the plough of Cincinnatus, no plough that ever cut the furrow can be named for interest with the plough of Burns. And what was a Roman patriot, however august and disinterested, to our large-hearted poet, whose bright-blazing meteoric eyes seemed to be piercing into the deep of thought and feeling, while his ploughshare was cutting through the clods a way for the seed, the blade, and the full corn in the ear—the divinity of whose daily toil was proved and complemented in his experience by the inspiration which descended from above, and seemed the witness of the gods to his humble, honourable calling here, and their prophecy of his eternal fame hereafter. To refer to an image Burns used himself afterwards, Elisha was not a prophet till he left the plough; but to Burns the shaft of the plough was his rod of inspiration and command, as his mind moved in the wind of the spring day, and his genius expanded and caught the colours of the April sun. Never was our poet more manly, more simple, often so bald, but always so beautiful, as in those poems and songs which, composed at the plough, he was to commit to his immortal page, leaning over his table or chest in his little Lochlea garret ere he went to rest!

His labours at the plough were diversified by various excursions on Sabbaths, and walks in the evenings on other days. The story of Wallace, as recounted by Blind Harry (abridged by Hamilton of Gilbertfield), had made a very deep impression on Burns' mind, especially the words—

> "Syne to the Leglen wood, when it was late,
> He made a silent and a safe retreat."

This wood was in his own locality, and he chose, he tells us, a fine summer day to visit it and explore every den and dingle where he supposed his heroic countryman to have been. No wonder though his heart glowed with a wish to make a song on him in some measure equal to his merits But two things were yet wanting to the birth of—

> "Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled"

—the wild moors of Galloway, and a mood caught from the thunder-cloud and the tempest which was beating on the brow of the poet, careering through it—the Spirit of the Storm! A poem on Wallace, written in the Leglen wood at this time of his life, would have been, we fear, a tamer affair. Surely the sternest Sabbatarian would hesitate ere he condemned in a poor man's life such precious breathing times (to quote again the words of Gilbert Burns) as this. It did not imply the forsaking of the assembling of himself entirely, or habitual religious disloyalty. Burns was generally found by his father's side in the house of God on the first day of the week. But sometimes his spirit moved him to spend the Sabbath in his own way—in shall we say for him a higher, holier fashion? to worship God in the solitary woods, or by the murmuring shores of the sea; there often, too, to seek after, if he might peradventure find, the Ideal of his Art, which appeared glimpsing away, yet beckoning him to follow, like a coy maiden, into the depths of the forest; and there sometimes, as he did to his silent, entranced brother, Gilbert, to repeat the newly composed effusions of his mind; and might not Nature be figured as becoming more deeply still to listen to the inspired numbers of the "Cottar's Saturday Night," and to scan the glowing features of a poet as he passed "sounding" on his way? There are no such Sabbath-breakers now!

Robert Chambers describes Burns ascending an eminence during the agitations of Nature, striding along a summit while the lightning flashed around him, and amidst the howling of the tempest apostrophizing the Spirit of the Storm. We remember no authentic record elsewhere of any such high-wrought and affected raptures. Here is his own well-known, simple, and truly sublime picture of his actual experience. "There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more (I do not know if I should call it pleasure, but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me), than a walk on the sheltered side of a wood or high plantation on a cloudy winter day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees and raving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion; my mind is rapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to Him who,

* "In the veins of the calyx foams and flows
The blood of the Samian vine,
But, oh! in the goblet of youth there glows
A Lesbium more divine.
Bright, bright, as the liquid light,
Its waves through thine eyelids shine.

"Fill up, fill up, to the sparkling brim,
With the juice of the young Lyæus,
The grape is the key that we owe to him,
From the jail of the world to free us.
Drink, drink, what need to shrink,
When the lamps alone can see us?

"Fill up, fill up, while I quaff from thine eyes
The wine of a softer tree;
Give thy smiles to the god of the grape, thy sighs,
Beloved one, give to me.
Turn, turn, my glances burn,
And thirst for a look from thee."

in the language of the Hebrew bard, 'walketh on the wings of the wind.'"

This is an extract from a Common-place Book Burns began to keep in April, 1789, and which will be found elsewhere. It contains many pithy and many poetical remarks; and coming from so young and inexperienced a man as Burns was then, is more wonderful than even his songs or poems, and ranks, though on a smaller scale, with the Journals kept by Byron, Foster, and Sir Walter Scott, as probably the very best in the literature of our country. We might have mentioned that Burns had, some time previously, established at Tarbolton a debating club, called "The Bachelors," a long history of which, written by the poet, has been preserved.

Thus ran on the life of the bard for two or three years, peacefully, honourably, and on the whole happily, although not without some aberrations unknown to his career ere he saw Irvine, with its bay, and links, and steeple. In those years, as with Rousseau, "Early love his Psyche's zone unbound," but it could be hardly said that she hallowed it with loveliness. If there was delight there was disenchantment, too, and perhaps he might have exclaimed with his brother Byron—

"The tree of knowledge has been plucked—all 's known."

We gather this from expressions in his "Journal," and from the guarded evidence of his friends, as well as from the dying words of his father immediately to be quoted. Meanwhile, that excellent man was fast sinking to the grave. He was not old, only sixty-three; but he was quite broken down by severe labour, anxiety, and misfortune. Burns, in a letter dated 21st June, 1783, gives a very distressing account of the general condition of the small farmers of the period—a state of things which, along with a dispute about his lease, preyed terribly on his father's constitution, and bowed him to the dust. Indeed, he was only saved from the horrors of a jail by a consumption; and in fine, on the 13th of February, 1784, he breathed his last. There were present only Mrs. Begg and Robert. She was crying bitterly, and her father tried to comfort her, although only able to murmur out a few words, closing with an injunction to walk in virtue's paths and to shun every sin. He paused, and then said there was one of his family for whose future conduct he felt some anxiety, and repeated the expression; when Robert stepped up to the bedside and said, "Oh, father, do you mean me?" The old man replied, "Yes;" and the poet turned round to the window, his eyes shining through tears, and his heart heaving with sobs. What a scene for a painter—a Wilkie, Harvey, or Paton! The good old man on his dying bed; the February sun shining dim and "mottie through the reek," and showing his "lyart haffets" waxing thin and bare; his pale, stern, and composed features, and his frame and aspect—purged, earnest, resolute, and stripped, as of one who was immediately to join a spiritual company; his eye fixed on his erring but beloved son; the daughter dissolved in infantile sorrow; and Robert, with his face, and its expression of anguish, and its large eloquent tears, hid as in that picture of ancient Greece, where the painter employed to paint Agamemnon's grief at the sacrifice of Iphigenia made himself immortal by not painting it at all, but drew a curtain over the unutterable tragedy; and assuredly Burns' countenance, with that blended look of sorrow, remorse, and shame, no pencil could adequately depict. Old William Burns was carried to the banks of the Doon, where he had begun his married life. The coffin was placed between two horses ranked before each other in tandem-fashion, and followed by his neighbours and family also, all on horseback, to Alloway kirkyard. There, in that spot, which of all spots bears most emphatic witness to the triumphs of his son's creative genius—near the "winnock bunker in the east"—lies William Burns. Robert erected a simple tombstone over his remains, having the following stanzas from his own pen :—

"Oh ye whose cheek the tear of pity stains,
Draw near with pious reverence and attend!
Here lies the loving husband's dear remains,
The tender father, and the gen'rous friend,
The pitying heart that felt for human woe;
The dauntless heart that feared no human pride,
The friend of man, to vice alone a foe,
'For even his failings leaned to virtue's side.'" *

Seldom, as said before, have we felt more than when contemplating this simple stone and inscription. While recording on a page, as immortal as is the "Cottar's Saturday Night," the virtues of the father, it seemed an unanswerable certification also of the heart, the filial piety, the nobility, and the essential Christianity of the son. It completed in thought, and rendered eternal, the link of reconciliation which seemed broken at the deathbed of the former, and you longed for some vacant space on which to inscribe the words, "They met in Heaven!"

Mrs. Begg has told us much of the excellence of the father. Twice only had she seen him angry—once when returning exhausted and irritated from some interview with factors and writers anent the unfortunate lawsuit, he found a young man, one of his servants, wasting hay; and another time when an old man, to whom he had been very kind, had told a falsehood about him. As he rebuked the foul-mouthed railer Mrs. Burns gave him a reproachful look, on which he sternly cried, "There must be no gloomy looks here." This was, so far as she could say, the first and the last time on which he ever said a harsh thing to his wife. When Mrs. Begg was employed in herding the kye her

* See Appendix, No. I.

father would approach and tell her about the grasses and wild flowers, to beguile the tedium of her solitary calling; and as she was afraid of thunder, he, whenever it threatened a storm, would come to her to soothe her terrors. We may as well add here, that Mrs. Begg used to say to an esteemed friend of ours, "Oh! Mr. S.,* my brother Robert was not the vile man they make him out to have been, he was a good, pious, God-fearing man, like his father!" *Valeat quantum valere potest.* It was certainly truer than the other version of his character.

CHAPTER IV.

BURNS THE YOUNG LOVER.

HERE we must retrace our steps a little, and tell the story of what are called Burns' "Calf Loves;" and this chapter, while it may be sweet, must be short, his grander *belles passions* being a good way forward in his life.

All who have read his magnificent letter to Dr. Moore (one of the finest of autobiographical sketches ever penned —how incomparably superior to those of Hume, Sir Walter Scott, or even that admirable one of Gibbon) remember his description of his first love, his partner in the harvest-field—"the bonnie, sweet, sonsy lass." Shakspeare in none of his love plays, the purest as well as most beautiful in the language, has surpassed in delicacy the following words:—"How my pulse beat such a furious ratan when I looked and fingered over her little hand to pick out the cruel nettle stings and thistles." To her singing power, too, he attributed his first initiation into poetry. Best of all in this little Idyl is Burns' brave panegyric on love, "that delicious passion" which had led him into so many scrapes, but which he was still determined to hold the first of human joys, our dearest blessing here below. We are reminded of Wordsworth's Ruth, who had been ruined greatly through the freedom of her rural life and the influences of scenery on her solitude; but the poet says—

> "The engines of her pain—the tools
> That shaped her sorrow—rocks and pools,
> And airs that gently stir
> The vernal leaves, she loved them still,
> Nor ever taxed them with the ill
> That had been done to her."

So Burns loved and lived to love, notwithstanding all the evil and misery it had caused him, and might with Byron sing that he was,

> "In spite of tortures ne'er to be forgot,
> The slave again of love."

With the harvest this early passion seems to have passed. Nelly Kirkpatrick was his inamorata's name, the daughter of the blacksmith who lent him the "Life of Wallace," and he wrote on her his copy of verses, "Handsome Nell." The next of his flames was Peggy Thomson, whom he saw and fancied in the garden of Kirkoswald. He met her again in the summer and autumn of 1784, and composed on her then the fine simple song—

> "Now westlin winds and slaughtering guns
> Bring autumn's pleasant weather."

Judging from a brief letter written by him in the November of that year to Thomas Orr of Park, he had by that time got off with the old love, and was trying to be on with a new. At all events, Peggy vanished from his view for ever and a day.†

The love customs and courtships of these days, and long after in Scotland, were very peculiar. When twilight fell fairly over the landscape, the young farmer or ploughman or weaver, it mattered not how hard had been his work during the day, or how early he must rise next morning, determined to have a "canny hour at e'en" amang the lasses. Often he would go *impransus*, and it was thought mean, we remember, in one villager that he would never go out a courting till he got his supper! Frequently he went alone and stealthily, like the hero of "My Nannie O;" and sometimes he would go along with a companion or two, with one either on his "ain hand" or acting as a "blackfoot." Not unfrequently they were in

* William Smith, formerly editor of the *Whitehaven Herald*, and nephew of Thomas Aird.

† No! for we find him in the Glenriddell MS. speaking thus of her:—"Poor Peggy, her husband is my old acquaintance, and a most worthy fellow. When I was taking leave of my Carrick relations, intending to go to the West Indies, when I took farewell of her, neither she nor I could speak a syllable. Her husband escorted me three miles on my road, and we parted with tears."

these evening walks watched by rivals, who followed their footsteps till they saw them fairly housed, and then either boldly entered themselves or knocked at the window to interrupt the fair fellowship. Occasionally battles between the different opposing lovers, fierce and bloody as bull-fights, took place. Sometimes the swain himself knocked or threw gravel on the window-pane as a signal for her to come out. Sometimes, as with Jenny's sweetheart in the "Cottar's Saturday Night," a modest tap proclaimed his presence, and then he entered and became one of the family for the evening. Sometimes the lads and lasses would adjourn to the barn yard and have a glorious game at *barley brax* (a sort of "hide-and-seek") among the stacks. Often there would be lonely walks—and then

"What sighs and vows
Amang the knowes!"

Sometimes the maiden would accompany the lover halfway home again, and sometimes the swain would do this instead of the maiden. Jenny Rintherout in the "Antiquary," it will be remembered, after flirting all night in the fisherman's cottage, was accompanied homewards by poor Steenie (drowned the next morning); and Scott adds, "at what hour he returned the deponent sayeth not." Distance and time on these occasions were entirely forgotten, and the lover cared not "though the night were e'er so dark and he were e'er so weary," and the nearer the morning the sweeter the enjoyment. Sometimes the lover was privileged to enter the chamber of his "Sleeping Maggie" and spend the night there. Sometimes, no doubt, scandal and shame were the results, but usually the intercourse was innocent, and if there were "mistaks" at times they were almost always "southered" afterwards by matrimony; and perhaps, on the whole, these customs were fraught with as little m'schief as the more refined but equally seductive love affairs of capitals. In this Robert Burns mingled with his characteristic ardour as a man and a poet. Gilbert Burns tells us he was not aspiring in his loves, and was as ready to court the servants as the daughters of the farmer, who, indeed, at that day could hardly be distinguished from each other in dress or language or manners. David Sillar was struck at the poet's facility in addressing the fair sex, and at the freedom and ease with which he entered into conversation with them. They seemed his natural game. They were from first to last the stars of his destiny. In one point he differed from his kindred spirit, Lord Byron, all whose loves —Mary Duff, Miss Chaworth, Miss Millbank, Lady Caroline Lamb, the Countess Guiccioli, and many others—were more or less beautiful; while according to the Ettrick Shepherd, who had seen a number of Burns' flames, they were for the most part very plain-looking, if not repulsive. Yet Burns told some one, that when he first met a highly refined and cultivated woman, she seemed in contrast with those in humble life, something quite new and dazzling—almost taking away his senses and breath; while *men*, on the other hand, of intellect and worth, were much the same in all ranks. It was not his want of discrimination, nor latterly of a high standard; it was his overpowering imagination, and his blinding passions, which made his dowdies divine, and "gave Helen's beauty to a brow of Egypt." And his feeling to some of his sweethearts could hardly be called love; it was rather a half-drunken dream, from which he was continually awaking.

Surely there was something far higher and holier in his heart when he wrote that sweetest of love songs, trembling with tenderness, radiant with sentiment, full of that love which is "indestructible"—"Mary Morison." Who that maiden was is for ever a mystery. There was one Morisson, a cabinetmaker in Mauchline, who might have had a daughter called Mary, and she might have been an early love of Burns; that is all we can say. Dr. Waddell errs, we think, in calling her an indifferent or unconscious maiden, for how then could the poet speak of—

"The wished, the trysted hour?"

It is evident he is jealous of her, afraid she should "wreck his peace;" but while he loves her to distraction, he struggles hard to believe it impossible that she can or will act thus—

"A thought ungentle canna be,
The thought o' Mary Morison!"

And was there ever such wooing, so instinct with the very soul of love and poetry, as in the lines ending—

"Ye are na Mary Morison!"

Along with "Mary in Heaven," "Mary Morison" is Burns' finest love song—so thought William Hazlitt. Indeed, we rather prefer Mary on earth, Mary at the window, to Mary in the skies! The "Riggs of Barley" has less ideal love, but has much human interest. It is a pre-Raphaelite sketch of a genuine Scotch courtship. We remember overhearing, many years ago, two young men discussing its purity—one maintaining that it excited luscious ideas, the other that it might do so in him, but not necessarily in others; taking, in short, the *honi soit qui mal y pense* ground, and we rather inclined to this view. The sweet name Annie (Ann is not such a favourite name) might suggest that the heroine was worthy of her name, and of Burns' muse. But it seems she was one Anne Merry (daughter of John Rankine, according to some), a tall and masculine-looking dame, who ultimately kept a house of public entertainment in Cumnock, who had had an early nocturnal adventure with the poet, but all whose beauty was lent her by the moon shining on the corn riggs.

She even expressed surprise to Burns that he had written a song about her, and he replied, "Oh, I was just wanting to gie you a cast amang the lave." But she, according to Robert Chambers, would all her life-long sing the song, "the Riggs of Barley," and speak tenderly of the memory of the poet.

Another of his songs had a more complex history. This was that entitled "Montgomery's Peggy." This was a kind of superior servant, who lived in the house of Mr. Montgomery of Coilsfield. Burns happened to sit in the same seat with her in church; and Robert Chambers hints that this might have put it into his head, like Dumbiedykes, who says of his intended bride, "It's the Laird of Lickpelf's youngest daughter, she sits next us in the kirk, and that's the way I cam' to think o't;" but Burns was not a Dumbiedykes, and perhaps to render a more poetic reason for it, she sang divinely; and then his experience might be that of one poet thus described by another—

> "When one summer's Sabbath eve a voice
> Rose in the church, like some intense perfume,
> The very strength of softness, balm of power,
> His heart went up upon it as on wind,
> And on its cadences came down again,
> His own no more!"

He entered on a brisk fire of *billets-doux* immediately, then wrote his song in her praise, and finally found, when he meant ulterior measures and began to think of matrimony, that Peggy's heart was already pledged to another!

But we have shot too far ahead, and must beg a thousand pardons of Ellison Begbie, the passion of Burns for whom once threatened to be rather a serious affair. She was the daughter of a small farmer in Galston, but was servant with a family on the banks of the Cessnock, two miles from Lochlea, and here Burns first knew her. She was hardly beautiful, but had a good mind, a graceful carriage, a fine figure, a fascinating manner, "twa sparkling, roguish een," and a fair education. This made her a general favourite; and Burns is reported, even after meeting Miss Burnet, Margaret Chalmers, Charlotte Hamilton, &c., to have said that Ellison Begbie could bear comparison with any of them in mind, and was, of all the women he ever seriously addressed, best fitted to have been his life-companion. At all events, he was violently enamoured, addressed to her some very carefully, if somewhat formally composed letters, and wrote a song called "Cessnock Banks," in which the poet actually pelts her with similes, like sugar-plums on a carnival night. Cromek preserved this poem in his "Reliques," and tells us he got it from the oral communication of a lady residing in Glasgow, whom the poet in early life affectionately admired. It is not likely this lady would have cared to retain a long copy of verses about a rival, and we agree with Chambers in thinking that she was the veritable Ellison herself, who, perhaps, lived to regret that she had not tried her hand in reclaiming the irreclaimable poet. Certain only it is, that she refused his offer of marriage—and it might be better for both.

His sister used to tell a curious anecdote connected with this amour. Burns sometimes was very late in returning from Cessnock banks, and one night his worthy father sate up to let him in and administer him a rebuke for his irregular hours. He asked his son where he had been, and Burns, by way of making an apology, told him that he had met the Deil in coming home, and described the meeting much as he did afterwards in his famous "Address":—

> "Ae dreary, windy, winter nicht,
> Wi' you mysel' I got a fricht."

William Burns was so electrified by his son's description that he quite forgot the reproof, and perhaps (like David Deans with Reuben Butler at his offer of marriage to Jeanie, who produced one, nay two, aged bottles of strong ale, in contrast with his usual habits), he would treat his son to the best in his humble house, and sit up long listening entranced to Robert, who that night, what with love and starlight and the fright he had got with the Deil, was inspired, and talked far above singing till "the wee short hour ayont the twal!"

Burns had great delight in linking his loves with the streams near which his favourites dwelt. Ellison Begbie was the "Lass of Cessnock Banks;" Mary Campbell is for ever associated with—

> "Ye banks and braes and streams around
> The castle o' Montgomery.

Jean Armour's image is reflected, now in the Ayr and now in the Nith; and Charlotte Hamilton, his ideal love, wandered to his eye for ever along the banks of the "Clear Winding Devon," and he still saw her there as he indited his last song—

> "Fairest maid on Devon banks,
> Winding Devon, crystal Devon."

One is reminded of Byron's verses to the river Po, which he too connected with the form of Madame Guiccioli:—

> "River that rollest by the ancient walls,
> Where dwells the lady of my love, if she
> Walks by thy brink, and still perchance recalls
> One faint and fleeting memory of me."

Such is a list of Burns' early loves—all of them interesting, all of them connected with fine effusions from his young genius, and all of them, we believe, innocent. But he had not yet met with his "Ain." Still the two destined to exert such influence on each other, and to be identified so closely and for ever, were now drawing near, were almost now arrived at their trysting tree.

CHAPTER V.

BURNS AT MOSSGIEL.

WE might perhaps rather have entitled this chapter, "Burns, Farmer and Poet;" for now for the first time he possessed, out of Parnassus, acres which he could call his own.

At Martinmas, 1783, Robert and Gilbert Burns took the farm of Mossgiel, a few miles from Lochlea, but situated in the parish of Mauchline, and within one mile of the village of that name. We visited some years ago the snug steading which still bears the name of Mossgiel, saw near it the field where Burns, as Wordsworth has it, "ploughed up the daisy," and enjoyed a glimpse of the fine undulating country beyond Mauchline and toward Kilmarnock in all the green glory of June. It was pleasing while walking along the road, which slopes gently from Mauchline to Mossgiel, and is begirt by trees, to remember that it was by this the poet must often have returned homewards from his engagements at the village —from kirk, market, Poosie Nancy's, and visits to some of his famous Mauchline belles. Mossgiel consisted of one hundred and eighteen acres of cold, clayey soil, on a bare upland to the east of Mauchline.

The Burns family, by ranking themselves creditors to their father for arrears of wages due them for their labours on his estate, had rescued from his creditors and the lawyers some portion of the stock of the farm to enable them to begin on their own account. Gilbert says, "Robert and I took the farm of Mossgiel, consisting of one hundred and eighteen acres, at the rent of £9, from Mr. Gavin Hamilton, as an asylum for the family in case of the worst. It was stocked by the property and individual savings of the whole family, and was a joint concern between us. Every member of the family was allowed ordinary wages for the labour he performed at the farm. My brother's allowance and mine was £7 per annum cash; and during the whole time this family concern lasted, which was four years, as well as during the previous period at Lochlea, his expenses never in any one year exceeded his slender income. His temperance and frugality were everything that could be wished."

Dr. Currie and Gilbert Burns both coincide in denying Robert much skill as a farmer. Nobody held the plough better; nobody had a more elegant cast of the hand while sowing than he; but his knowledge of markets, rotation of crops, and other mysteries of husbandry, was slender; and he would often, in following his whim or indulging his social propensities, neglect his farming duties. It would be much with him as it was with James Hogg at Altrive, of whom his successor on the farm, "Old Scottie," a venerable worthy of ninety-four, recounted to us in 1859 the following anecdote:—His wife came once to Hogg and told him that a fine and favourite mare was dangerously ill, and a farrier should be sent for. The reply was—"I canna attend to her joost now, for I'm going up the hill to shoot a 'mawkin' for oor dinner." He went up the hill accordingly, shot the "mawkin," and when he came down found the mare dead. Burns always referred those who came to him on business matters to his brother—"Oh, talk to my brother about that." Yet it has been said by good authorities that Gilbert, too, knew more about the theory of farming than its practice. Both, however, brought industry, good intentions, and honesty, if little capital and experience, to the firm. Robert in the summer of 1784 was far from well. His disease seems to have been irregular action of the heart—a distemper which, in another form, perplexed and annoyed him all his life. At this time, as well as before, he kept a tub of water by his bedside, and by plunging in got temporary relief. Some may say that the wet-sheet or water-cure, applied internally as well as externally, would have saved him from the ruin that followed. Much good they might have done him; but, alas! he had passions raging within him with which water or whisky either had at that time little to do.

Along with this irregular action a worse calamity befell him;* a serving girl, Elizabeth Paton by name, in his family bore him a child, and this, although he tried to set it at defiance, and laugh it over, glorying in his shame, undoubtedly gave him the keenest anguish; and, perhaps, his chief consolation under it was the fact that his father was now "where the wicked cease from troubling," and where the thought of human aberrations, even those of a dear son, cannot disturb eternal peace. In this dark

* See Appendix, No. III.

season he applied at moments, too, to celestial aid, sought comfort in God, although it may be (as Pollok has it), "he sought reluctantly and therefore was not heard." His prayer, or rather prayers, for there are two of them—"A Prayer in the Prospect of Death," and stanzas on the same occasion—have been preserved, and are on the whole noble strains of devotion and contrition. Perhaps it is rather daring in him to point to the passions of his nature, and to trace them upwards to God as their author—

"Thou know'st that thou hast formed me
With passions wild and strong,
And list'ning to their witching voice,
Has often led me wrong."

But it is the daring of high reverence, and of one who cannot even in penitence be unjust to himself, or, like David, take what may seem to some the one-sided view—

"Gainst Thee, Thee only, have I sinned."

Robert Chambers says, with great truth and good feeling, "It is strange that we so often hear of the faults of Burns, and of the defences advanced by his friends, and that so little notice has been taken of what at once attests the reality of these faults, and most powerfully pleads their pardon—the deep unostentatious penitence of the Bard himself."

It is somewhat difficult to reconcile the sincere contrition of these verses, and the spirit in which he describes the same incident in his history in his epistle to that facetious gentleman, John Rankine. Burns "before and after dinner" will not solve the mystery, for the poet at that time was a very sober man, as a rule, and his after-dinner hours were spent at the plough. Two considerations will in part explain it: first, the great exuberance of his animal spirits, which after deep depression rose to a higher pitch, for as he says himself, he had "aye a heart aboon a'" his calamities; and, secondly, there was a great deal of the chameleon about him; he took his colour from his acquaintances, even when far inferior to himself, and was equally at home with John Rankine and Dugald Stewart, with "Racer Jess" and Charlotte Hamilton, with Dr. William Robertson and Willy Nichol. And this, if it was his weakness as a man, was his power as a poet and essential dramatist, the Shakspeare of Scotland. He became all things by turns, and was seldom himself, because he was everybody else. The grand blunder of many in reference to Burns is first admitting his exceptional character, and then expecting him to be altogether unexceptionable. First, they take him at his own word, "I am Spunkie;" and then they look in a "Will o' the Wisp" for the regularity of a planet and the fixity of a star.

Rankine was hardly worthy to be a confidant or companion to Robert Burns. He was famous for his practical jokes; he had on one occasion, by putting in whisky instead of hot water in a kettle, overcome the sobriety of an "auld-licht" elder, and had extemporized a dream which made all the countryside ring with laughter. It is thus recounted by Allan Cunningham:—"Lord K——, it is said, was in the habit of calling his familiar acquaintances *brutes*—'Well, ye brute, how are you the day?' was his usual mode of salutation. Once, in company, his lordship having indulged in this rudeness more than usual, turned to Rankine and said, 'Brute, are ye dumb? hae ye nae queer story to tell us?' 'I hae nae story,' quoth Rankine; 'but yestreen I had an odd dream.' 'Out with it by all means,' said another. 'Well,' said Rankine, 'I dreamed I was dead, and that for keeping other than good company on earth, I was sent down stairs. When I knocked at the low door, who should open it but the Deil. He was in a rough humour; and he said, 'Who may ye be, and what's your name?' 'My name,' quoth I, 'is Rankine, and my dwelling-place was Adamhill.' 'Gae wa' wi' ye,' quoth Satan, 'ye canna be here; you're ane o' Lord K.'s *brutes*; hell's fu' o' them already.' This sharp rebuke, it is said, polished for the future Lord K.'s speech."

Burns had been in Lochlea a freemason, and soon rose to be depute-master to the Fraternity. It is hard to say what effect this had upon his morals. Chambers represents him as entirely indifferent to the indulgences connected then with Freemason Lodges; but this is surely refining ridiculously. Burns enjoyed these from his first to his last, from Irvine to Dumfries, as the whole tenor of his life and writings shows; but it was long ere they to any degree overpowered his will, and probably of all Mason Masters he was at first the most exemplary, just as the Excise Books (see *Chambers' Journal* and our Appendix) have recently proved that he, of all the gaugers of Scotland, was among the most regular in his habits, although a little allowance was made for him as a "Poet." ("He is a poet, and does pretty well," are, we think, the words). He continued his "Commonplace Book," and inserted in it from time to time scraps of prose and short poems, such as "No Churchman am I for to rail or to write;" and one of his most characteristic copies of verses, entitled "Rantin' Rovin' Robin,"

"There was a lad was born in Kyle."

In one of the letters of this date he gives rather a plain than pleasant account of the famous Lucky Buchan, the Joanna Southcote of Scotland—an account containing a hit here and there worthy of the author of the "Holy Fair." Burns was always, in reference to every form of fanaticism, a clear seer and a bold speaker, denouncing it as an offence to the intellect, an outrage to common sense, and a scandal to religion. One of his verses of this time seems to point to the Coming Woman, to Jean, whose acquaintance he was making—

"Though cruel fate should bid us part
As far 's the Pole and Line,
Her dear idea round my heart
Should tenderly entwine.
Though mountains frown and deserts howl,
And oceans roar between,
Yet dearer than my deathless soul
I still would love my Jean."

He had not been long in Mossgiel till he met with Jean. She was the daughter of a master mason, named James Armour, in Mauchline village. He met her first, it is said, at a penny ball which took place at the close of a race in the village, which usually occurred in the end of April. The poet and Jean were in the same dance, but not as partners. Burns had a dog, which followed him into the room, and created some confusion and fun by tracking his master wherever he went; and he laughingly said to his partner (whoever she was) that he wished he could get any of the lasses to love him as well as his dog did. One day after, he was passing through Mauchline Green where Jean was bleaching clothes; she cried on Burns, whose dog was running among them, to call him off. This led to a conversation, in which Jean, who had overheard his remark at the ball, asked him playfully if he had got any of the lasses yet to love him as well as his dog.* This was the prelude of an intimacy, and Jean speedily became the Ruling Star of his heart—we might rather say, the Moon in his sky, not altogether unattended by sister planets—peerless, but seldom quite alone.

Our readers will at this point do well to turn up Burns' famous lines on the Mauchline belles. None of them, however, seemed ever to have any chance with Jean, attractive as they appeared to others. There might have been betwixt Burns and Jean a mutual fascination—that meeting of eyes and souls at once and for ever, that love at first sight, in one or both, which is said frequently to precede and prophesy marriage. And although there were, as we have hinted and will afterwards see, others for whom Burns felt a strong and pure tenderness amounting to love, he never ceased to regard Jean (except perhaps for a short period after her burning the marriage lines) with a degree of respect as well as affection. To reconcile these apparently jarring facts we do not attempt and know not how it can be done, nor do we mean to assoilzie Burns from blame in the matter; but he was, as we have said, an altogether exceptional being—a burning man—susceptible, passionate, and imaginative beyond the measure of a score of ordinary men; and we must just judge of him as he was and take him as he is, for better for worse, and on the whole be thankful for him. His own words were true—

"He 'll be a credit to us a',
We 'll a' be proud o' Robin."

* See this scene well rendered in Stirling's "Burns in Drama,"

And now from the root of a fixed love there burst out a most extraordinary efflorescence of poetry. Robert Chambers remarks that "the mass of poetry which gave Burns his principal fame came from him in a period not exceeding fifteen months. After that it became, comparatively speaking, exhausted." No doubt his poetry seemed exhausted by or shortly after that time; but it was the marvel of this most marvellous man that after one vein shut, another and a more copious and a sweeter one opened, and the cessation of his Poems was only the commencement of his Songs—songs written, like the last novels of Scott, amidst misery, bodily disease, and ruin. We add an element which did not belong to Scott, which did belong to Burns, and which adds mightily to the wonder—Remorse. We know only one parallel to this, and it is obviously not complete—the case of Byron's later works, which, considering the circumstances in which they were written—expatriation, contumely, dissipation, a broken heart and constitution, and a fevered brain—are now generally judged superior to his earlier ones. How different from some other poets of the period, who have outlived their genius and its true works for a quarter of a century, and who, if they still continue to write, it is in a style of helpless self-imitation or stilted exaggeration, which is more lamentable than would be utter silence! "Superfluous lags the veteran on the stage" is bad enough, but "Superfluous struts the veteran on the stage" were far worse!

Thus Burns sings shortly after seeing Jean Armour:—

"When first I came to Stuart Kyle,
My mind it was na steady;
Where'er I gaed, where'er I rade,
A mistress still I had aye;
But when I cam' roun by Mauchline toun,
Not dreading any body;
My heart was caught before I thought,
And by a Mauchline lady."

And this fixity in his affections seems to have had a centralizing influence on his genius. Previous to this he had a vague ambition, he tells us—

"For poor auld Scotland's sake,
Some usefu' plan or book to make,
Or sing a sang at least."

Now his "Commonplace Book," dated August, 1784, shows that this wish, after beating wildly about, had found an opening, since in it he expresses a desire to be the Ayrshire bard, and to make "the fertile banks of Irvine, the romantic woodlands and sequestered scenes in Ayr, and the heathy mountainous source and winding sweep of Doon emulate Tay, Ettrick, Tweed." Few young poets but have felt a similar ambition in reference to their natal streams and valleys. But Burns got his wish and more, and became not only Ayrshire's, but Scotland's bard. All

these extracts from the "Commonplace Book" of this year are peculiarly interesting; they are the flutterings of the wings of the caged bird against his bars, and portend the long, strong, exulting flight that was before him.

One thing remarkable about this wonderful series of verses is their occasional character. Young poets, like Kirke White, Shelley, Keats, and Pollok, seize eagerly on some big sounding theme, such as "Time," "The Cloud," "Hyperion," "The Course of Time;" Burns takes up familiar matter of to-day—

> "Some natural sorrow, grief, or pain,
> Which has been and may be again."

And hence almost every one of his Mossgiel poems bears specially on his own history, and they become as a whole an unintentional autobiography. One of his first is his "Epistle to Davy, a Brother Poet, Lover, Ploughman, and Fiddler." In it he produced a thought he had long rolled in his mind, like a "pebble in the ocean," that in the last extremity of his fortunes to beg was still a *dernier ressort*—

> "The last o't, the warst o't,
> Is only but to beg!"

He introduces, too, a panegyric, too flowing and eloquent to be insincere, on his Jean, coupling it with a word for Margaret, David Sillar's beloved, who was not fated to become his wife. Margaret Orr, by the way, was servant to Mrs. Stewart of Stair. Burns had lent Margaret some of his songs, which she showed her mistress, who, being a woman of taste and sensibility, was very much delighted with them, and requested the author to come up to the drawing-room; and for the first time his clouted shoon and (in his own words) "clouterly carcase" came in contact with a Turkey carpet, and he, no doubt with a little trepidation, found himself in the presence of a fashionable lady. He never feared the face of man, but he did fear the terrors of a beautiful and accomplished woman. Mrs. Stewart, however, seems to have become his warm friend.

In a different vein he wrote "Death and Dr. Hornbook." One John Wilson, the well-known story assures us, a schoolmaster in Tarbolton, added to his ill-paid occupation that of a grocer, and ultimately a druggist—was, in plain English, a quack. In this complexity of calling he rather prospered; and Burns would not have disturbed him in any of them had he not encountered Wilson at a Mason-lodge meeting, where, we presume, the "clachan yill" had made both a little "canty," and where the apothecary made a needless display of his medical knowledge. Burns contradicted him; and still fired with the dispute that followed, composed on his way home this admirable satire, and repeated it to Gilbert the next morning as he was holding the plough, and Robert was letting water off the field beside it. It, along with a dispute with the heritors, had the effect of blowing the unlucky Dominie out of Tarbolton. Yet after some years in the Gorbals, Glasgow, settled as a teacher and session clerk, Wilson became a much respected though pedantic little man; and used, it is said, in his cups (for, like Bailie Jarvie's "feyther afore him," "he took a glass at an *orra* time") he used to drink the memory of Burns, and thank him for the good office he had done him in cutting short his Æsculapian career. He died at a great age in 1839.

"Death and Dr. Hornbook" shows a daring genius, apart from its satirical vein; and his description of the grim skeleton has never, we think, been equalled in poetry, unless by the late Thomas Davidson ("Scottish Probationer") in one of his poems—the "Hobgobliniad"—and which pushes the grotesque still further, and abates not an atom of the grisly grandeur.

There was on Fastern's E'en (Shrovetide) a "rocking" at Mossgiel—a social meeting, borrowing its name from the old custom of country women spinning on a rock or distaff. At this meeting, among other songs, one was sung purporting to be by an elderly man residing in Muirkirk called John Lapraik (a name presumed to be a contraction of Leprevick, the name of a distinguished early printer in Scotland). The song is supposed to be addressed by a fond husband to his wife, and is very tender and simple, although we believe it is not by Lapraik at all, but borrowed from an older source. To Burns it was quite new; and with all the frank enthusiasm of his nature, he determined instantly to write to the old poet. The result was the excellent poetical epistles to John Lapraik. Lapraik sent a poetical reply to Burns' first letter by the hand of his son, who found the poet in the field sowing. When he gave him the letter, Burns said, "I am not sure if I know the hand;" but when he opened it, he became so engrossed that he let go the sheet holding the grain, and it was half emptied ere he perceived his loss. Lapraik was encouraged by Burns' approbation to publish a volume of verses; but like David Sillar's, and those of a hundred other imitators of Burns in that period, it had no success. We have seen, however, the verses Burns admired so much quoted in collections of poetry of this century.

We will speak afterwards of Burns' religion. He was about this time plunged into the thickest polemical strife. Two theological parties were then engaged in war to the knife in the west of Scotland. One consisted of the Old Whigs, who held to the unmitigated Calvinism of the Confession of Faith; the other of a Broad Church School, come prematurely on the stage, who professed a more latitudinarian creed, bordering with some on Arianism, with others of a decidedly Arminian type, and with Burns verging at one time, he tells us, on "the daring path Spinoza trode," although this apparently he had forsaken

some time before. Whatever might be his settled speculative opinions, his heart sympathies and his floating talk were all with the "New Light." In this he followed the example of his father, who had written a little manual of belief for the use of his children, in which semi-Arminian views were very sedulously inculcated. * In this, too, he obeyed the impulses of his own bold and unfettered intellect, and gratified his love of wild and witty talk. He tells us he used on Sabbath intervals to puzzle Calvinism with great heat and indiscretion. Nor did he confine himself to conversation, but lifted up his mighty pen on the liberal side. First came his poetical epistle to John Gowdie of Kilmarnock, a well-known eccentric of the day —a worthy man, but a sad heretic—who had published a volume of essays, containing what were thought very heterodox sentiments, and called in irony, "Gowdie's Bible." This, along with John Taylor of Norwich's "Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin," was the *Vade mecum* of the "New Lights." Then followed his more celebrated "Twa Herds, or the Holy Tuilzie." One of these was the Rev. John Russell, then of Kilmarnock, subsequently of Stirling. In Professor Wilson's essay, prefixed to Blackie's edition of Burns, will be found a picturesque description of this gentleman's preaching, which seems to have frightened even Christopher North. He was called Black Russell from his dark complexion—was a big, brawny man, had a stern look, a voice like a bull's, and tremendous energy of address. We remember his son, who was minister of Muthil, Perthshire, and was a smaller edition of his father—a vehement, earnest, excellent man, of the highest Calvinistic views, whose preaching was so popular that little parties often used to walk from parishes seven or nine miles off every Sabbath to hear him. They were called "Muthilites;" and we were wont to watch them returning on the Sabbath evenings of summer from a journey of at least sixteen miles, back and forward, to their homes in Comrie, Perthshire. We heard Mr. Russell preaching once at the Old Church tent of Crieff on a Sacramental Sabbath evening, and the echoes of his very powerful voice linger in our ears still. Burns would have called it, not speaking, but "rowting." He had not his father's full physical energy; after his usual Sunday's work, would lie vomiting bile all the evening; and died in middle life. A volume of his sermons was published, to which Dr. Chalmers supplied a preface.

Black Jock had had a quarrel with Alexander Moodie of Riccarton, another zealous advocate of the Auld Licht. Some say, according to Chambers, that they were riding home one evening when Moodie, in a sportive frame, tickled the rear of his neighbour's horse. The animal performed certain antics along the road, much to the amusement of the passers-by, but greatly to the discomfiture of Black Jock, who afterwards learning the author of the trick, never forgave Moodie for it. There were other grounds of quarrel; and in a dispute about parochial boundaries, which came to the Presbytery, "The Twa Herds" lost their temper, and abused each other at a terrible rate, to the great scandal of their party, and the intense amusement of Burns, who was present, and soon after recorded their unseemly dispute in lines of imperishable fun. "The Twa Herds" was the first of Burns' poems to see the light, and became very popular. Many of the clergy, as well as laity, received it "with a roar of applause." A copy found its way to Ochiltree, where one William Simpson, himself a rhymer and a choice spirit, was parish schoolmaster. He addressed a rhyming epistle to Burns, warmly commending his poem and his genius generally. Burns replied in one of the noblest of his poetical effusions, the "Epistle to William Simpson," adding as a postscript an allegorical account of the New Light controversy, which, though clever, is certainly a falling off from the previous letter. Burns did not always, like ladies, put the pith into the postscript. We notice here how a little genuine praise never failed to rouse our poet to his full mettle—acting like that barley of the gods of which Homer speaks, on the coursers of Achilles. Usually the strong man is excited, the weak man enervated, by the "voice of praise." Dr. Johnson, indeed, was thankful for the praise of every human being; but Burns weighed and analyzed before he swallowed what came to his share. Two stanzas in this epistle to Simpson should be written in gold—one is that on Wallace—

"At Wallace' name what Scottish blood," &c.

What a raw and bloody glory shines out of the line—

"Still pressing onwards, *red wat-shod!*"

It is, indeed, as Carlyle says, too "frightfully accurate for Art." The second was a great favourite with Coleridge—

"The Muse, nae poet ever fand her,
Till by himsel' he learned to wander
Adown some trottin' burn's meander,
An' no think lang,
While he can stray and pensive ponder
His heartfelt sang."

Thus it often was with Burns himself; his genius supplied the matter, the river the melody of the strain.

The success of the "Twa Herds" brought to Burns a new lot of acquaintances, chiefly among the New-light clergy, who, in a church so Calvinistic as the Scotch, were so far in a false position (and this always reacts in some way, either on comfort or character), but had nevertheless many virtues, and a liberality of spirit quite after Burns'

* See Appendix, No. IV.

own heart. Such were the Shaws, MacGill, and young MacMath of Tarbolton, afterwards a victim. Burns had long known Gavin Hamilton, writer in Mauchline; indeed, he was his landlord as well as his boon companion. Hamilton was a careless clever fellow, generous and good-hearted, but by no means rigidly righteous; given to lift his potatoes on Sabbath days, and to other peccadilloes. This brought him in contact with the kirk session. These courts were once all-powerful in Scotland. Infinitesimally small were the cases and crimes which they intermeddled with. How their members spent their Sabbath evenings, how they feed or fed their servants, how they paid their butter accounts—such were some of the thousand and one questions on which these inquisitors insisted, and for defalcation or omission in which they summoned high and low to their tribunals. After the Secession began new subjects of investigation were started, as to what was called occasional hearing; and those who attended any church but their own, even when there was no preaching there, were sisted and severely dealt with. We have heard of a waggish elderly man who was summoned to appear at a Seceder session to answer for going one day to attend service in the Established Church, when there was none in his own. He said in defence, "Maister Moderautor, I aye thocht Heeven was a great muckle place; I never kent till noo that it was built to haud only a wheen (few) Seceders!" The naïvete of the reply saved him from censure. Gavin Hamilton was not of the submissive kind, any more than honest old Tam Brough; he wrote the session a plain-spoken letter; he set Daddy Auld, the minister, a very good but narrow man, and his ruling elder, William Fisher (Holy Willie), at defiance, and carried the case from session to Presbytery, and Presbytery to Synod; got, in fine, a certificate of being free from all church censure, and thus gained the victory. He was greatly aided in this by Robert Aiken, writer in Ayr, who was a natural orator, to whom Burns afterwards inscribed his "Cottar's Saturday Night," and who pled his cause with great ability. And to gratify him Burns "loused his tinkler jaw" on his enemies, in the most freespoken and fearless of all his satires, "Holy Willie's Prayer." Holy Willie—

"That leein', cheatin', prayin' billie,"

was found guilty afterwards of embezzling the church funds, and ultimately died in a ditch. Altogether, including Burns' blasting touch, Willie's punishment was greater than he could bear. He was hardly worth such fiery powder and shot from such a marksman.

Meanwhile Mossgiel was not thriving as a farm; and what with bad seed one year, and a wet season another (1785), had become a losing concern. This no doubt threw Burns back more determinedly on his intellectual resources and poetical pursuits. Hitherto he had only been a local celebrity, and had he died at this time, would have scarcely been remembered out of Ayrshire. But he now took a flight which must, in any circumstances, sooner or later have brought him into the sight of all Scotland, and of the world—he wrote the "Cottar's Saturday Night." Everybody remembers the feelings of his brother Gilbert, when he heard Robert repeating it to him on a Sabbath day. To Gilbert it must have come more refreshingly, as he and their family had been annoyed at the recent desecration, as they thought, of his genius, in inditing "Holy Willie's Prayer" and so forth. What a bound up from this "Devil's kitchen work," as the Germans talk of, to such a divine close as that of the "Cottar's Saturday Night," which approximates, in simple yet rounded majesty, the climaxes of Isaiah or the glowing perorations of Paul. Some suppose that the approbation which his brother, known by Robert to be an excellent judge of literary matters, gave this masterpiece, as much by the tremulous and tearful enthusiasm of his face and bearing as by his words, encouraged him to think of publishing a volume of poems, and that this accounts for the extreme rapidity with which poetry flowed from him all this winter and spring. It is, indeed, certain that he composed in this short period such poems as the "Mouse," "Hallowe'en," "Man was Made to Mourn," "Address to the Deil," "The Jolly Beggars," the "Vision," the "Epistle to James Smith," the "Author's Earnest Cry and Prayer," the "Twa Dogs," the "Ordination," and "Scotch Drink." But some of these pieces were surely prompted by a higher motive than the mere prospect of seeing them in print. They are pure, gushing inspiration. Was he thinking of "gude black prent" when he sent his poetical "Hail, fellow, well met," after the mousie scampering from his plough? Was he thinking of Johnnie Wilson and his Kilmarnock press when, in the "auld clay biggin',"

"Ben in the spence, right pensively,
He gaed to rest,"

and was kept sleepless by the most glorious "Vision" that ever visited poet in his youth, since Shakspeare dreamed the "Midsummer Night's Dream?" Was there any anticipation of coming fame, or of the title of Satan's laureate, in the tumultuous glee which flashed in his eye when he indited the words—

"O Thou! whatever title suit thee,
Auld Hornie, Satan, Nick, or Clootie?"

Was aught in his veins but the most Shakspearean riot that ever revelled therein, when he peeped through the bole of Poosie Nancy's, and saw the devilry of dissipation, the Bacchanalian abandonment, the wild orgies, as of a Scotch Walpurgis Night, which were being celebrated in it? No doubt, when he wrote "The Twa Dogs" he was

thinking of publication; but it, with all its admirable sense and satire, and one or two inimitable touches of nature, is of a much less inspired mood than the others, and has more method than magic in its web.

Some of these pieces were composed at the plough, when neither had his eye waxed dim nor had his natural strength abated. There, of course, he sang the "Mouse." And there, turning his sad eye across the melancholy November landscape, over which the weary winter sun was going down, he breathed out the monody—matching with that "Prayer of Moses, the man of God," the Ninetieth Psalm—one thought in which De Quincey, slow to praise the Scottish poet, recognizes the hand of a master—

> "See yonder poor o'erlaboured wight,
> So abject, mean, and vile,
> Who begs a brother of the earth
> To give him leave to toil."

Often he composed, and still oftener he transcribed, in the little garret above the *but* and the *ben* of the farm-house of Mossgiel. In this garret there was a little window in the roof, through which he might see the stars. A small curtainless bed stood in the room where the two brothers slept. Under the window was a little deal table with a drawer; on the table the poet wrote, stooping as he did so, and in the drawer he deposited his verses. Scarcely has he left for the fields again, to his afternoon labour, till we see his young sister, afterwards Mrs. Begg, silently stealing up stairs into the Sanctum to peruse the poems her brother had left there. Conceive her, as she reads the "Mouse" or the "Vision," enjoying one of the purest pleasures possible on earth—a relative and young enthusiast reading the finest poetry of the age, and whispering every now and then to herself, Can these actually be the compositions of my brother? Let us trust that she sometimes stole them from the desk for an hour or twain, and showed the better of them to his and her mother.

Burns when he composed the "Mousie" was not alone. A youth, called John Blane, who was guiding the four horses which were then required for the plough, remembered the incident, and his running after the "wee beastie" to destroy it, but was checked by Burns, who immediately after became abstracted and thoughtful. Blane, who became a stage-coachman, told afterwards a stranger he met on the coach that Burns came into the stable in the evening and read him the poem, and asked, "What he thought of the Mousie now?" He added that the poet, while he was with him, though he did sometimes indulge too freely, was a kind master, and regularly made family worship night and morning.

Even before his father's death Robert had taken a part in this exercise, reading the chapter, and giving out the psalm. Afterwards, as the head of the house, he took on himself the whole of the service. Some of his family remembered distinctly Robert's practice, and Mrs. Begg used to say that she never in her life heard such prayers as her brother's; and we can easily conceive from specimens of his prayers which have been preserved in rhyme, that his family devotions would be distinguished by great fervour, eloquence, and pathos, and not less by simplicity and sincerity—the two main elements of true prayer.

The Mauchline of this period must have been quite a caravansera of queer characters. Besides its famous belles, were several females of more questionable notoriety: Nanse Tinnoch, with her hostelry, where Burns pretended to be a nightly visitor, although the "Lucky" herself said that she scarce knew the colour of his coin, and that his half mutchkins were mostly myths—"Poosie Nancy," with her rough, roaring public, crowded with strollers of every kind, and floating with "Kilbagie," the "blue ruin" of Ayrshire (although distilled at Clackmannan), where Disrespectability lifted up her unabashed head and held "leets and lawdays" under the astonished midnight; and "Racer Jess," her daughter, a sort of unbreeched Goose Gibbie (see "Old Mortality"), who ran races for wagers, and unmatched for swiftness of foot, carried messages through the country — an Iris unballasted either by chastity or laziness. Then there were sundry male curiosities: wee James Smith, the "sleest, pawkiest thief" in all Burns' acquaintance—a dark-complexioned, clever, little man, who talked wondrously well, and yet had the sense to yield the *pas* to the Mossgiel ploughman; some noble specimens of the old Covenanting character—stern livers, high thinkers—men who read Calvin in translations and Dr. Owen in English, and criticized sermons severely, and prayed long, and mourned over modern degeneracy, and were themselves entitled to do so, being firm to their principles as Arran or Ailsa Craig (James Humphrey was a very fair specimen of this class)—not to be confounded with a class, who were also there, of "yill-caup commentators," who discussed religion in change-houses, and hiccupped most undeniable orthodoxy as the wee short hour was about to strike on the dull, cold ear of Night; of this latter class "Holy Willie" being the *facile princeps*.

Such a fertile field even Mauchline opened to Burns' genius; and he made the most of it, especially in his "Holy Fair" and "Jolly Beggars." Dr. Walter Smith said not long ago, with more point than felicity, that "the reading of this latter *brochure* leaves a bad taste in the mouth." This perhaps depends a little on the state of the mouth that tastes it. At all events, it is not what James Hogg would have called a "wersh" taste which it leaves, but one of tingling gusto; and no one but must admire the marvellous variety of badness in its characters —all bad, none odious; the excessive spirit of its writing, especially its songs, and the wild harmony produced from

the heterogeneous materials, so that a naked dance of Satyrs assumes almost an ideal aspect; and the movement is graceful, as if it took place to some such music as Ariel played to Stephano, Trinculo, and the other bewildered and tipsy ones of the "Tempest"—ending in a storm chorus which gives an apotheosis to Blackguardism. Burns drew it from the life; but while John Richmond and James Smith, who had accompanied him to the sight, applauded it to the echo, his brother and mother deplored it, and at her request the good-natured bard laid the poem aside, and for years forgot its existence.

The "Holy Fair" seems to have been a rather late production, but one that breathes the same spirit which was indeed the spirit of a year or two of his life—the spirit of reckless satire and of dare-devil revelry—a spirit which was to appear afterwards in short and desperate snatches toward the close of his career. There is a freedom of touch and of motion in this poem which he never surpassed. The whole (as is true also of "Tam o' Shanter") runs out as from a mould, and reads like a single sentence. There is all the French elasticity without the French *persiflage* or heartlessness, although there may be a smack of the pleasure of the stolen waters and the bread eaten in secret. A man eating pork with great relish once paused and said, "I wish I were a Jew." "Why?" was the answer; "for in that case you would not enjoy your favourite food." "Yes; I would then have the pleasure of eating it, along with the *gust of sinning*." Burns must have felt this gust while composing the semi-scandalous but excessively clever poem, "The Holy Fair." It is entirely original, with the exception of its best and worst word, *damnation*. Tidings of *salvation* it had been; but at Dr. Blair's suggestion was changed to what it is, and Burns was but too ready to acknowledge the obligation.

About the same time Burns came forward as the Laureate of Scotch whisky, of which, says one of his biographers, he was no lover, and yet speaks very like one. That article was then severely taxed, not so much for moral motives as because the English distillers had a jealousy of the Scotch. When the obnoxious impost was taken off, Burns expressed his gratitude in some well-known verses. He had previously commended the spirit with a gusto and an eloquence which showed more than a theoretical appreciation thereof. Perhaps further on in his history he might, like Esop with his dish of tongues, have given the *per contra* of his warm and rather one-sided panegyric. Yet there is one stanza of genuine poetry—

> "Nae cauld, faint-hearted doubtings teaze him;
> Death comes, with fearless eye he sees him,
> Wi' bluidy hand a welcome gi'es him;
> And when he fa's,
> His latest draught of breathing lea'es him
> In faint huzzas."

This, with all deference to poor Burns, is rather the spirit of the bard than of the barley. Unquestionably Burns wrote many of his poems and songs in an overexcited state, but as certainly the very best of them flowed from him when he was in his normal condition; although even in that normal state, when in the eye of Nature, he might say with Coleridge that he was—

> "Inspired beyond the guess of folly,
> By each rude shape and wild unconquerable sound!"

His fault was that in later life, as his spirits fell low and his hypochondria deepened, his genius sometimes condescended, like the Britons with the Saxons, to call in auxiliaries, which ultimately led that haughty power in chains. John Gowdie, author of "Gowdie's Bible," is said to have visited Burns, who behind a stook read him some verses which greatly pleased him, and he invited him to visit Kilmarnock, where at Gowdie's table he met such local notorieties as Major Parker Paterson, town clerk, Dr. William More, and Mr. Robert Muir, merchant, afterwards a great friend and correspondent of the poet.

Kilmarnock has produced or harboured men of no little eminence, such as an eccentric but very clever United Secession clergyman, Robertson by name; his successor in ability and eccentricity, Dr. John Ritchie, afterwards "Voluntary John of Potterrow," Edinburgh; Dr. James Morison, the learned and able founder of the Morisonian sect in Scotland; and, besides many others, our recent friend Alexander Smith of the "Life Drama." Burns might have known the first mentioned of these, Robertson, although we have no evidence that he did. When he first visited "Auld Killie" he found it in a state of great excitement about a minister. For forty years Moderatism —under, first, one Lindsay, who was shrewdly suspected to have owed his appointment to his wife, Margaret Lander, who had been housekeeper to the Earl of Eglinton (*verb. sat sap.*), and hence Burns' lines—

> "Curst common-sense, that imp o' Hell,
> Cam in wi' Maggie Lauder:"

and, secondly, under a Mr. Mutrie—had walked the course. But now both ministers were dead, and a young and zealous highflier, James Mackinlay by name, was appointed, and the Moderates in wrath prevailed on Burns, their willing organ, to vent their chagrin and his own in rhyme. Hence the "Ordination," written in a style of fierce, personal, and polemical satire, which Burns practised rather often at this time, and which, although excessively poignant and clever, never even approached the higher reaches either of his wit or his genius. It, however, like the rest of such pieces, created a roar of applause—a roar which has got fainter and fainter as time has elapsed, and as the event and the characters which suggested it

have sunk into oblivion. We think that Mackinlay, the hero of the poem, became less popular afterwards with his partizans, owing to a marriage with his servant. He was a man of good elocutionary gift, but of ordinary intellect.

Burns takes more general ground in his next poem. This, which forms a kind of spur upon a chain of vigorous pasquinades, is his "Address to the Unco Guid," and the last verses, so well known—

"Then gently scan your fellow-man,
Still gentler, sister woman,"

constitute a living moral and truly Christian inference from such miserable hurley-burleys as "Holy Fairs" and "Ordinations." They stamp Burns a great moralist—a title he deserves none the less but all the more from his occasional aberrations, and corroborate Curran's statement about the "sweet morality of a Burns," which some have thought paradoxical. He could—

"Others teach their course to steer,
But run himself life's mad career;
Wild as the wave."

Besides other productions of a wildish tone and temper, such as the "Louse" and "The Inventory," belonging to this prolific period of his history, we may close by mentioning his deliciously natural and pathetic poem, "The Auld Farmer's New Year's Salutation to his Auld Mare Maggie." On animals of every variety, and especially on those within the reach of the cruelty or caprice of man, Burns always shone, because he always sincerely sympathized with them. And if some hypercritics call him, therefore, the "Bard of the Brutes," nay, a sublimer brute himself, we care not. It was as a friend, an advocate, a mediator between them and man, that he spake; and that mission was not only a high one in itself, but qualified him to discharge his loftier and later one, the proclamation of universal charity and brotherhood—the publication of peace on earth and good will to men, in the immortal words—

"When man to man the world o'er
Shall brithers be and a' that."

CHAPTER VI

BURNS IN THE NADIR.

NADIR, most people know, is the point diametrically opposite to the zenith, the lowest pole in the horizon. Burns uses the word with a different bearing when he says, in his letter to Dr. Moore, "The baleful star which had so long shed its blasting influence on my zenith for once made a revolution to the *Nadir*." The darkest hour usually precedes the dawning. And assuredly this was the case with Burns. The presentiment or prophecy which crossed his soul at the sight of the "Mouse"—

> "I backward cast my e'e
> On prospects drear;
> And forward, though I canna see,
> I guess and fear!"

was now about to be fulfilled. Evil deeds are often punished long ere they occur by misery which appears causeless in the offender at the time, who is in this way "paid in advance" after a terrible fashion. Burns might have read a rehearsal of his own fate in that of Peggy K——, the daughter of a landed proprietor in Carrick, whom he met, admired as one of the first accomplished young ladies of the upper classes he had ever seen, and on whom he wrote the song "Young Peggy." Her fate was wretched, although it is only indicated, not fully stated in any biography we have read. At seventeen, engaged to an eligible lover in her own rank of life, she was hanging already over the precipice, and doomed to lose first her good name, and afterwards her young life. We might conceive her referred to in the lines on the "Daisy"—

> "Such is the fate of artless maid,
> By love's simplicity betrayed,
> And guileless trust."

And if so, this is but a pendant to the stanza which follows :—

> "Such is the fate of simple bard,
> On Life's rough ocean luckless starred,
> Till billows rage and gales blow hard,
> And whelm him o'er."

Charles I. had, it is said, a look of dim, settled sadness on his face, which was thought to prognosticate a violent death. And amid all the fun and riot of Burns' poetry, there peers out ever and anon a look in which one may read strange matters and woeful prophecies, even as on his face, above the blaze of his bright black eye and the mirth that lurked about his mouth and chin, there lay a dark, unmoved cloud of profound and melancholy feeling—not merely of reflection, not at all of fear : it was a face confronting and defying the scowl of Destiny!

We linger as long as we can ere we venture to narrate the lamentable events which now occurred in the poet's history, and may first record for praise one man in Ayr who was of material service to Burns' success as a poet. This was Robert Aiken, to whom, as we saw, his "Cottar's Saturday Night" was inscribed as—

> "My loved, my honoured, much respected friend."

Aiken was a writer and tax collector. He was a man of great natural eloquence, as we have seen from his successful defence of Gavin Hamilton; and above all, he was a warm admirer and powerful reader of poetry. He was said by Burns to have read him into fame. Wherever two or three were gathered together, the enthusiastic Aiken was sure to introduce the name and read the poetry of Burns. He had two criteria of good poetry : it was good if, first, it brought tears to his eyes; and secondly, if it made the buttons of his waistcoat "skelp." Once, when reading a poem on the death of Burns by some admirer or other, the latter catastrophe was produced : his vest had burst open, while his eyes were streaming. It reminds us of a late eccentric, clever, but very nervous clergyman in Newcastle, who was always imagining himself at the point of death with one imaginary disease or other. One day walking in the country with a friend, he suddenly got pale as a corpse, and exclaimed, "It's all over now; did you not hear that dreadful sound? Some vital part of my interior has burst, and I have only a few minutes to live." On investigation it was found that he had broken his waistband! This, the crack of doom to him, was the signal of loud and inextinguishable laughter to his companion and to everybody else. On one occasion Aiken, who was a nephew of Dr. Dalrymple, Ayr, made a speech at a

private party about his venerable uncle, which melted the whole assembly into tears. An Irish officer, blubbering like a child, looked round on the company, and exclaimed, "Can you tell me the *maning* of this?" One is reminded of Dandie Dinmont—"Deil 's in the man; he has made me do that I have not done since my auld mither dee'd!" To use a vulgar expression, Burns and Aiken "jumped at each other," and became fast friends. Nor did the relation of patron and patronized produce its usual unhealthy effects. The choice of Aiken to head the "Cottar's Saturday Night" was enough to stamp him as a worthy and noble man, whatever might be his faults and failings; and Aiken reciprocated and in some measure repaid the honour.

It was in the spring of 1786 that Burns' sorrows came upon him, as usual in a complex form. His farm was becoming every year a more ruinous concern. How much this was the effect of misfortune, and how much of Burns' engrossment with society and literary matters, cannot now be ascertained. Both probably contributed. Burns often acknowledges that he was not a good man of business or farmer, and few of his kindred are—

"The enthusiast Fancy was a truant ever."

But let us remember that the very greatest of England's tuneful tribe have been regular and laborious men—Shakspeare, Milton, and Wordsworth. But Burns, with perhaps as bold and broad a sail as these men, wanted their ballast; and ere he had time to take it in, he died. But while his farm was going wrong, other circumstances were clouding his horizon. He had now for nearly a year known and loved Jean Armour. She was rather more than an average specimen of a Scottish maiden of the middle rank of life, although, we have heard, counted a little "glaikit" by the matronage and female critics of her neighbourhood. She was tall and well built, rather than particularly good-looking. But she had fine dark eyes, a complexion slightly olive, and a bewitching smile. She sung and danced well. In her latter years, and after the poet's death, she seems to have been all that was sensible, respectable, and motherly. Burns' love for her was not romantic, like that he felt for Mary Morrison and Mary Campbell; nor ideal, like that he felt for Charlotte Hamilton; nor a compound of desire, vanity, and literary sympathy, like that he felt for Clarinda: it was a fresh, warm, and hearty outcome of his physical and passionate nature—a young man's love for one he did not look at from afar with chivalric and awestruck affection, but whom he knew familiarly, met often, and clasped to his bosom when he did so, sans phrase or form. It may be that the prejudice felt by the Armours at "Rab Mossgiel" kept him out of the house, and led to private assignations and the train of dangerous consequences flowing therefrom. Jean, at all events, became as "ladies' love to be," &c., and the effect of the *eclaircissement* was disastrous to our poet. Jean urged Burns to give her a written acknowledgment of her as his wife, an act equivalent in Scottish law to a marriage. At first Burns refused to consent to this arrangement; but an interview with her melted his resolution, and he gave her what she desired. Jean's object was to conciliate her parents, but in this she failed. Old Armour, who had no great idea of Burns from the beginning, and who overrated the value of his daughter, knew well, too, that Mossgiel was not thriving. Had this event occurred a year afterwards, it had been different; but the daughter of a stone-mason was thought too good a match for the bankrupt and unfortunate poet. Armour sought to annul the marriage, and prevailed on Jean to surrender to him the paper, which he put into the hands of Mr. Aiken, Ayr. In vain did Burns offer to go to Jamaica to better his condition, promising to come back in some years and claim Jean as his wife; in vain did he offer, if this plan failed, to become a common labourer, to support his wife and her expected family. Armour was inexorable, and Jean, too, at last yielded to the strength of his persuasions and threats; and as she had previously given up the paper, she now surrendered the poet. We neither deeply blame nor greatly wonder at her conduct. Like Lucy Ashton, she was sore beset by the influence of father, mother, family, public opinion, and had nothing to support her but her love to a man who was standing at the lowest point of depression, with no fortune, little fame, and a damaged moral reputation. She was too melancholy and utterly depressed to sing, as Burns represented his former sweetheart singing—

"The rantin' dog the daddie o't."

She became the most miserable of women, and her misery only wanted one element to make it despair, and that, too, seemed at this time very near—the madness or suicide of her poet-lover. And now came the darkest point in Burns' history, unless his rejection at Dumfries at a later date was a yet deeper deep, because succeeding a great triumph. Hugely indignant at Jean, yet loving her still, he ran, he tells us, into dissipation of every kind, attending mason-lodges and other merry meetings, vainly seeking "to drown in rant the heartache of the night." He wrote "Laments," odes to "Ruin," and so forth, forcing out thus a brief and imperfect solace to his woes. All, all were found miserable comforters—

"'Hungry Ruin' had him in the wind."

A hundred plans of extrication from his difficulties floated through his mind. At last one of some feasibility presented itself; he would go to the West Indies, and to

purchase a passage would publish a volume of poems. Gavin Hamilton advised him to do so, and Burns eagerly consented. Proposals of publication and subscription papers were instantly thrown off.

While pressed down by these woes, and with the cares of publication coming upon him, this extraordinary being was engaged in an under-plot of passion and sorrow, enough itself to have crushed many ordinary men to the dust; we refer, of course, to the history of Mary Campbell, or "Highland Mary." She was of Highland extraction, from Dunoon, and daughter of a sailor in a revenue cutter, whose family resided in Cantyre. She had spent some of her earlier years in the family of the Rev. David Campbell of Loch Ranza, in Arran, a relation of her mother's. She became a servant in the family of Gavin Hamilton in 1785, acting as nurse-maid to one of his sons. She is said not to have been peculiarly graceful or feminine, but very sweet and artless. The tradition of the village generally attests her purity, although calumny has not spared her connection with Burns. She was sprightly and blue-eyed. She knew Burns some time before their final courtship, although Mrs. Begg remembers no reference to her from her brother's lips except once, when he told John Blane that Mary had refused to meet him at the Old Castle—a ruined priory near Gavin Hamilton's house.

Spurned by the Armours, and given up by Jean, Burns reverted to Mary, who was residing as a dairy-maid in Coilsfield House; resumed his acquaintance with her; and, in fine, determined to affiance her to himself for ever. They met, as everybody knows, for this purpose on the banks of the Ayr, diverging probably to the woods of the Fail—a tributary stream which washes the domain of Coilsfield—on the 14th of May, 1786, a Sabbath day. They stood on opposite sides of a small brook, laved their hands in the stream, and exchanged Bibles—Mary giving her lover a plain Bible in one volume, Burns presenting her with a handsome one in two. On a blank leaf of one of the volumes was inscribed in Burns' hand the words, "And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, saith the Lord (Levit. xix. 12); and on the second, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths" (Matt. v. 33). On the blank leaf of each was Burns' name inscribed, along with his mason-mark. We see it reported in a recent number of the *Scottish American Journal* that Mary's mother after her death gave the two-volumed Bible to her other daughter, Annie Campbell, along with a lock of Mary's hair, who in her turn gave each of her two daughters one of the volumes. But they became, it seems, the cause of discord in the two families; and to remove this one William Anderson, a mason, son of one of the families, bought from the two sisters each her copy, carried them out to America when he emigrated there in 1834, and thence they were sent home to Ayr to the trustees of the Burns monument, and are deposited there.

Mary, who seems now to have fixed to be Burns' wife, and to go with or after him to the West Indies, returned and spent the summer with her parents. She crossed the Clyde to Greenock to visit some relatives, and to have a parting interview, some say, with Burns before he went abroad; but in the house of a relative, Peter MacPherson, a ship-carpenter, she fell ill of a fever, caught while waiting on a sick boy, her brother, Robert Campbell. And in spite of an amulet prepared by her superstitious friends in the Highlands—consisting of seven smooth stones, picked up at a cross burn and boiled with new milk—which she had to swallow, Mary died, it is supposed in October, 1786, and lies now in the West Churchyard, Greenock, in a mean part of the town, but with a tall elegant monument over her. Fortunate, may we not say, she! to have departed so early to the "Land o' the Leal!" With Burns probably she would not have been happy; and have not his two immortal songs reared such a mausoleum over her dust,

"That kings for such a tomb might wish to die!"

He addressed several songs to her while she lived, such as "My Highland Lassie," "Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary?" but he never mentioned either his engagement or her death to any of his relatives. We will see what Mrs. Begg tells about this by-and-by. In the Scottish journal referred to it is said, that after Mary's death Burns went to her abode and asked some token of her; but her mother, who disliked him, sternly refused. Others, however, maintain that the mother was more friendly to the poet than was the father, and spoke well of him as a "real warm-hearted chiel, though she did not think her sweet lassie would have been happy with such a wild and profane genius," and probably she was right.

During the troubled time extending from his disgrace with the Armours, and his appearance on three successive Sabbaths to be rebuked in the church for his incontinence, down to the publication of his poems, Burns' life was by no means uneventful. There was a certain Elizabeth Black—who ultimately ended as a very respectable hostler wife in Alva, and who was probably known to our late friend, Dr. Eadie, of Glasgow, a native of Alva, and who must have been a youth of eighteen when Mrs. Black died—who boasted that she knew Burns in his early days, and that he wrote on her the song, "From thee, Eliza, I must go." About this time, too, he saw the "Bonnie Lass o' Ballochmyle," Miss Wilhelmina Alexander, sister of Claud Alexander, Esq., a gentleman who had enriched himself in India and bought Ballochmyle. We visited the place some years ago, and admired exceedingly its rich-wooded braes and distant prospect of the Ayr and the village of

Catrine, and fancied below the trees the vision of beauty still passing, and the musing poet still standing with folded arms and looks of insatiate admiration, like one transfixed by Love's lightning and rooted to the spot. It was some months afterwards that he sent her the exquisite song, of which Miss Alexander (prepossessed against Burns by some village gossip) took no notice, but which she lived to value very highly, and to say of the original copy, that she would never part with it. Her nephew, Mr. Alexander, erected a bower at the spot, and there a facsimile of the song and the accompanying letter was framed.

Burns' pen did not lie idle during these anxious and miserable months. He wrote songs, dedications (to Gavin Hamilton), *jeux d'esprit*, such as "The Calf," composed on the Rev. James Steven, of London and Kilwinning, his famous "Tam Samson," &c. We saw that subscription lists had been thrown off, and the announcement of his volume as advenient had created a buzz through Kyle, Carrick, and Cunningham, if not through Renfrewshire and Lanarkshire; for in these shires, and beyond them, many had begun to hear of the fact that there was a great poet rising among them—

> "At times a warning trumpet blown,
> At times a stifled hum,
> Told Scotland from his mountain throne
> Her KING did rushing come."

He had nearly, like Joseph, come out of prison to reign.

He was now called upon to give security for the maintenance of Jean's expected offspring. This from sheer poverty he was unable to do, and was obliged in consequence to skulk in a farm-house belonging to a relative of his (an aunt), named Allan, in Old Rome Forest, near Kilmarnock, lest he should be clapt into jail. His *Nadir* was now at its deepest, when there arose in the July sky of 1786 the first streak of his undying fame.

CHAPTER VII.

BURNS IN ASCENSION.

THIS volume was published by John Wilson, Kilmarnock, and went immediately to the heart of that country-side; old and young read it with equal avidity and unmingled delight. Plough-boys and maid-servants gladly gave their "sair-won penny fee" to get possession of the poems of Burns. Many wept blessed tears over the "Cottar's Saturday Night;" many laughed day and night over the "Address to the Deil" and the "Holy Fair:" all were enchanted with the ease, the power, the nature, and the truthfulness of the pictures of Scotland—its life, scenery, and manners. His early friends and patrons felt pride as well as pleasure in their hearts. Some, indeed, might not be able to believe for very gladness that these "old familiar faces" were so beautiful and so striking after all: was this really the "Vision" they had heard Bob Aiken read? Others took the credit, perhaps, of predictions they never made, and criticisms in his favour they never uttered. The inhabitants of Mossgiel alone, we are told, no copy of their friend's immortalities reached, although there, too, the echo of his fame was heard with surprise, pride, and pleasure. "Had our father only been living to see this day!" some of them would exclaim. The edition of six hundred speedily disappeared; another of one thousand was projected, and Burns became for the first time in his life the master of £20! The success of a first work is felt by all authors to be exhilarating. But never perhaps in the history of literature was there such a sudden bound as in the case of Burns from misery, contempt, poverty, and semi-madness, to present popularity and the prospect of future fame and competence. Were, not a reprieve, but a royal crown given to a criminal at the gallows, it would be only a type of the suddenness of the transition and the thoroughness of the triumph!

John Wilson was a bookseller in Kilmarnock, who afterwards throve in the world; and removing to Ayr, started the first Ayrshire newspaper — the *Ayrshire Advertiser* — which became a good property. Burns, while watching the publication and correcting the proofs, was a great deal in Kilmarnock. The first edition did not contain some of the best pieces—"Death and Dr. Hornbook," "A Prayer in prospect of Death," &c.—which were all then composed, and a number of others which he wrote afterwards—such as his "Address to Edinburgh," the "Brigs of Ayr," and the "Address to a Haggis." Jamaica was still in his view. He had made an engagement with Charles Douglas, of Port Antonio, to act as book-keeper on his estate for three years, at £30 a year. He had even been afraid he would have to indent himself—*i.e.*, become a bound apprentice—that Mr. Douglas might pay his passage. And as soon as he possessed nine guineas, he took a steerage passage in a vessel which was to sail from Greenock in September.

Burns' spirits seem to have, as might have been expected, continued good for a time after the success of his book. He went from town to town collecting his moneys, and meeting with old and new friends, cracking jokes, attending social meetings, and making such rhymes as these (he was mounted on a sorry hack, like that of Andrew Fairservice, yeleped "Souple Sam," *lucus a non lucendo*):—

"Here comes Burns
On Rosinante;
She 's d—— poor
But he 's d—— canty."

He had returned to Mossgiel, and was living quietly there, when one evening (September 3) a brother of Jean's came in to tell him that she had born him twins—a boy and a girl. The Mossgiel family took the boy and the Armours the girl, who soon, however, died. Jean had visited Paisley in March, had lived with her uncle, Andrew Purdie; and reports of her borrowing money and flirting with a young weaver there, called Robert Wilson, originally from Mauchline, had reached Burns, and made him very miserable. He had a lurking liking for her still, and perhaps she became yet dearer to him after her *accouchement*. He says, "A very fine boy and girl have awakened thoughts and feelings that thrill now with tender pressure, and now with foreboding anguish, through my soul." A number of the gentry of the county began to show Burns flattering attention; and perhaps if he had remained and taken root in Ayrshire, it had in the long-run been better for him, alike commercially and morally. One was MacAdam of Craigengillan, to whom he addressed

a copy of verses; another was Sir William Cunningham of Robertland; a third was Mrs. Stewart of Stair, of whom we heard farther back. He sent her a collection of his own published songs, including the "Lass of Ballochmyle," in a highly complimentary but sincere-seeming letter. There was another and, in a social position, a humbler friend, who turned out of greater service to the poet. This was the Rev. George Lawrie of Loudon, a parish in the neighbourhood of Mossgiel. Lawrie was an accomplished man himself, and the friend of men that were more so still. He had been the means of introducing MacPherson's Ossianic fragments to Dr. Blair, and was intimate with him, with Blacklock, Robertson, and others. He had read Burns' poems, and had sent a copy to good Dr. Blacklock for his opinion. Burns spent a night in his house, which was the abode of refined yet hearty hospitality—the ideal of a Moderate minister's dwelling. There were his host, his pleasant lady, a young son, a daughter, beautiful and accomplished, who could play on the spinet—an instrument new to Burns—another daughter in her teens, and some children. There was in the manse (tell it not to "Daddie Auld;" whisper it not to "Holy Willie!") after supper a dance, in which the poet ploughman danced with Miss Lawrie—keeping time admirably, as she afterwards said. How commonplace all this looks to us now, but what a rare treat to him. Heart full, he retired to bed; but being somewhat late in rising the next morning, the son went to inquire for him; and meeting him on the stairs, asked him how he had slept. "Not well," replied Burns; "I have been praying all night. If you go up to my room, you will find my prayers on the table." These were his "Lines Written at a Friend's House." Miss Lawrie had also a scrap of verse from Burns' pen, beginning—

"The night was still, and o'er the hill." *

He seems to have remained with this delightful family till the afternoon, and left them, carrying away and leaving regret. Mr. Lawrie, no doubt, would lament that such a noble being was quitting his native land so soon, and for ever. As usually happens, in proportion to the exquisite delight of the previous day, in such contrast to Burns' ruder revelries and coarse society, was the deep rut of the reaction. He became very, very sad. It was a lowering evening in autumn, with the clouds driving over the sky, the wind whistling through the rushes and long spear grass, and cold pelting showers striking ever and anon upon the face of the solitary traveller. It was altogether such another night, *mutatis mutandis*, as fell dark over poor Shelley, our truest poet and sincerest man since Burns, in Italy when he sung—

"O wild west wind, thou breath of autumn's being."

He found a solace in his noble ode to the "West Wind," which he wishes to become the trumpet of a prophecy, and to—

"Drive his dead thoughts over the universe,"

and asks the question"—

"If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"

Burns' mood, if more hopeless, was more subdued, as he composed, striding along, "the last song he was ever to measure in Caledonia"—

"The gloomy night is gathering fast,
Loud roars the wild inconstant blast;
Yon murky cloud is foul with rain,
I see it driving o'er the plain.

Farewell, old Coila's hills and dales,
Her heathy moors and winding vales;
The scenes where wretched fancy roves,
Pursuing past, unhappy loves.

Farewell, my friends, farewell, my foes!
My peace with these, my love with those.
The bursting tears my heart declare—
Farewell the bonnie banks of Ayr!"

We cannot exactly fix the date of the evening Burns composed this song; it was in autumn, 1786, probably in the close of August. On the 3rd September he heard, we saw, of the birth of his twins; and a day or two after came tidings to Mossgiel which entirely altered the course of his destiny. The history of Thomas Blacklock is well known. He was born in Annan; when six months old he became blind through small-pox, but was carefully tended and taught by his father, and afterwards, being a great favourite from his gentle temper, he was never without some companion to help him in his studies. At the age of twelve he wrote verses. At twenty he came to Edinburgh, where he was instructed in Latin, French, and other languages, acquiring French chiefly in conversation with a French lady, the wife of Provost Alexander. He published in 1754 an edition of his poems, and soon after a quarto edition by subscription, which brought in a considerable sum of money. He now devoted himself to the study of theology, and was presented to the parish of Kirkcudbright; but being opposed by the parishioners on account of his blindness, ultimately withdrew on a moderate annuity. He married the daughter of a Dumfries surgeon, named Johnstone, who was a great blessing to him. He resided finally in Edinburgh, and supported himself by keeping boarders. He was a most amiable and excellent man, and after attaining a respectable place among the literati of Scotland, and issuing a number of books, he at last died in 1791, aged seventy. He was the

* See Poem.

means of drawing out of obscurity a number of young men, and helping them forward in life. And now he performed the best deed of all in befriending Burns. We can conceive the joy wherewith Burns, heavy laden under the burden of many cares, read the letter which Mr. Lawrie kindly forwarded him from Dr. Blacklock, praising his poetry, and urging him to issue a second edition. Assuredly, if this letter found the poet in the harvest field, he would work no more that day! He did not, however, (though he seems to say so himself in his letter to Dr. Moore), hurry instantly to Edinburgh, but remained at Mossgiel for two months. During this period he wrote the "Brigs of Ayr," inscribing it to the architect of the new brig, Mr. Ballantyne, a special friend. He began to cherish the idea of becoming an exciseman. One day as Mrs. Begg was working at her big wheel, the harvest being over, and Robert and Gilbert being in the apartment, a letter was handed in to the former. He snatched it eagerly, went to the window, opened, read it, and she saw a look of the intensest anguish crossing his face as he went out without uttering a word. It was the news of Mary Campbell's death! Dugald Stewart, who resided at Catrine, a few miles off, had heard of Burns and his wonderful poems from Mr. Mackenzie, a clever surgeon in Mauchline. He invited him, along with Mr. Mackenzie, to dine at his house, and there happened to have called there by accident Lord Daer, the son of the Earl of Selkirk, who had been one of Dugald Stewart's pupils. Burns has recorded his impressions of the young lord in his well-known verses, and Stewart in his equally well-known letter. He wrote about this time a "canty" rhyming letter to one William Logan, a retired major, who lived at Park, near Ayr. He now, too, began his intimacy with Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop. This lady, a daughter of Thomas Wallace of Craigie, and reputed a descendant of the great Sir William, had been afflicted by a long severe illness, preying with peculiar heaviness upon her spirits, when a copy of Burns' poems was laid by a friend on her table. She opened it at the "Cottar's Saturday Night," and like Gilbert when he heard it recited, was absolutely electrified. It acted like a charm; and she instantly sent off a messenger sixteen miles to Mossgiel, with a letter to Burns, desiring half a dozen copies of his poems, and requesting him to call at Dunlop House. This was the beginning of a correspondence which continued during the poet's life. He again visited Mr. Lawrie's manse, and had a kind of tift with Mrs. Lawrie about the case of Peggy K——, mentioned before; Mrs. Lawrie blaming him for undue severity on "sister woman," not a common fault with him, and he replying in lines which may be found among his poems. The *Edinburgh Magazine* for October, edited by James Sibbalds, a literary bookseller, published a most favourable criticism on his volume. He now definitely abandoned all intentions of going to Jamaica, and fixed to start for Edinburgh on the 27th or 28th of November. Mr. Ballantyne, of Ayr, hearing that Burns was prevented from printing another edition of his poems by want of money to pay the printer, generously offered him £27 for the purpose; but advised him to go to Edinburgh as the best place for publishing. Not long before he started there was a *Gaudeamus*, probably on the 10th of November, in the St. James Lodge of Masons, of which Burns was a depute-master, and which met in a small inn kept by one Manson. John Lees, who survived "Brother Burns," spoke of it as an "awfu' nicht." Burns came to it in a pair of buckskins, out of which he would pull the other shilling for the other bowl till it was five in the morning!

At last, on the 27th of November, 1786, he set off for Edinburgh, a distance of sixty miles. It used to be currently said that he walked on foot, although, as we shall immediately see, Gilbert Burns asserts that he rode upon a borrowed pony. But, at all events, whether on foot or horseback, he travelled "crooning" to himself his favourite lines—

> "As I cam o'er by Glenap,*
> I met an aged woman,
> Who bade me keep up my heart,
> For the best o' my days were coming."

* Glenap, a romantic glen in the south of Ayrshire, near Ballantrae.

CHAPTER VIII.

BURNS AT THE ZENITH.

BURNS' Glenap soothsayer was, like her of Endor, so far right and so far wrong in her vaticination. The morning was coming, and also the night. The best and the worst days of Burns were now before him. Edinburgh was to raise and to ruin him.

Gilbert Burns says that he rode on a pony, borrowed from a friend; and Robert Chambers corroborates the statement, with the additional evidence of Mr. Archibald Prentice of the *Manchester Times*, a relative of the late Mr. Prentice of the *Glasgow Chronicle*, and a most worthy man, with whom we, too, had some literary correspondence. Mr. Prentice writes a letter to Professor Wilson, published in the *Edinburgh Intelligencer* for March 8, 1841. In it he states that through an Ayrshire friend—George Reid of Barquharry—Burns had become acquainted with Mr. Prentice's father, the farmer of Covington Mains, who testified his admiration for his poetry by subscribing for twenty copies of the second edition. (It should be twelve only, as we see in the list of the subscribers' names). It was arranged by Mr. Reid that Burns should, on his journey to Edinburgh, make the farm-house at Covington Mains his resting-place on the first night. All the farmers in the parish had read with delight the poet's then published works, and were anxious to see him. They were all asked to meet him at a late hour; and the signal of his arrival was to be a white sheet attached to a pitchfork, and set on the top of a corn-stack. "The parish is a beautiful amphitheatre, with the Clyde winding through it; and my father's stack-yard, lying in the centre, could be seen from every house in the parish. At length Burns arrived, mounted on a pony borrowed from Mr. Dalrymple, near Ayr. Instantly was the white flag hoisted, and as instantly were the farmers seen issuing from their houses, and converging to the point of meeting. A glorious evening, night, morning, followed, and the conversation of the poet confirmed and increased the admiration created by his writings. Next morning he breakfasted with a large party at the next farm-house, tenanted by James Stoddart; took lunch, also with a large party, at the Bank with John Stoddart, my mother's father; and rode into Edinburgh in the evening on the 'pownie,' which he returned to the owner a few days afterwards by John Samson, the brother of the immortal Tam." This is Mr. Prentice's statement. We got a letter some years ago, when editing Nichol's Edition of the Poets, from a gentleman in Carnwath, giving us a few particulars of Burns' visit, a little different from this. He says that the sheet was hoisted from Covington Hill, being a spot visible from a considerable distance. Burns did call in passing at John Stoddart's, but he did not alight. Stoddart remarked that they were in great confusion, as they had a bride in the house. "Weel, weel," said Burns, laughing; "Heaven send the lassie good luck." Good luck accordingly followed the blessing of the bard. The lassie became the mother of a numerous family, who all did well in the world. One daughter settled in Moscow, became milliner and dress-maker to the Empress of Russia, acquired a large fortune, and returned to her native country.

We have strong doubts if this event, of the occurrence of which there can be no doubt, took place on Burns' first visit to Edinburgh. He is generally said to have performed that journey on foot, and to have been so fatigued with the walk that he was indisposed for some days—an indisposition to which he alludes in his letters, and which is more likely to have been produced by a long walk than by a ride, unless, indeed, the hospitalities of the Mains had been excessive; and certainly three meals in so short a compass of time, at the then rate of convivial living, was hard work. It is scarcely, however, likely that the farmers would have gathered to meet him unless they had been previously acquainted with his poems. But the circulation of his first edition had been limited, and was almost entirely confined to Ayrshire. The enthusiasm in Carnwath was more probably produced by Mr. Prentice's extra copies of the second edition (see Chambers', vol. i., Appendix), circulated by him among his neighbours, and Burns had afterwards occasion more than once to pass that way.

The same Carnwath gentleman (it is twenty years since he wrote us, and we regret exceedingly we have neglected to preserve his name) told us in his letter another story connected with Burns. In the spring after he died Thomas Nimmo, a native of Carnwath, having received

his discharge from the army in England, was travelling home with his comrade. Passing through Dumfries, they inquired the way to St. Michael's Churchyard, to visit the poet's grave. Following a footpath through the wilderness of ornamental structures which deck that famous burying-ground, they looked round for a stone to tell them where he slept. Not finding anything of the sort, they made up to a female in deep mourning who was sitting on the ground a little farther on. Nimmo thus addressed her —"Mistress, we are strangers, and would feel obliged if you would show us the grave of Burns." Pointing to the narrow mound at her feet, and bursting into tears, she said—"That, soldiers, is his grave, and I am his widow." The poor fellows apologized for disturbing her sorrows, and went on their way. It were a good subject for a painter—Jean Armour at the grave of Burns while no monument marked the spot.

No word or prospect of the grave on the 28th November, when the eye of Robert Burns first rested on the towers and temples, the Castle and Calton Hill, of Auld Reekie. Worn out and wearied a little by long walking he might be, but his spirits were high. "Hope rose before him like a fiery column, the dark side not yet turned," and the Sybil's song was yet sounding in his ear. Did a sunbeam from the Day-star, setting over his beloved West, strike upon the Castle-rock as he entered, preceding and announcing the arrival of the brightest of Scotland's sons? or did dark and ominous clouds, black with more than the gloom of November, gather on the brow of Arthur's Seat, as the man doomed to be first the enslaver and then the victim of the proud city was slowly approaching the scene of his glory and his shame? Certain it is that he entered Edinburgh entirely unknown, and perhaps unnoticed, unless a curious townsman might ask what travel-soiled, slouching peasant, with those marvellously bright eyes, is that, and had ere he passed ceased even to wish for a reply. The feeling of one for the first time entering London is usually that of intense insignificance, produced by the enormous crowd of human beings. The feeling of one entering Edinburgh is wonder at the grand objects and grander associations of the place: the shadow of the Castle falls on him like a thunder cloud, and he dares hardly breathe as Holyrood, with all its memories of kings and crimes which had so long dwelt in his imagination, starts up to his eye, like a bloody spectre from his low lair in the valley. Burns, it is likely, after some such solemn thoughts in his mind at the first sight of Edinburgh, had to consider the practical question, where was he to sleep, and could think of no "howff" whatever save the lodging of honest John Richmond, once a clerk with Gavin Hamilton, and a jolly companion of the poet's, now residing in a single room in Baxter's Close, Lawnmarket, for which he paid three shillings a week. Joyfully does the humble clerk rise from his chair to welcome Burns, and a long night might they spend, conversing on the news of the West, ere the wearied poet retires to his bed. The next day he is unwell, and keeps it, and has no doubt many a sad and sombre thought as he now more fully realizes his solitude in the great city. It is said of Carlyle that when he first transferred himself to London, and commenced his then thankless and unappreciated literary work, he sat down with the *sternest determination*. And no doubt Burns would summon up his most iron resolution, too. After his brief indisposition was gone he began, as Nanty Ewart has it, a "cruise about Auld Reekie." He would visit the Castle and gaze delighted on the distant shores of Fife; the rising palatial streets of the New Town; the huge dusky masses of the Old, surmounted by the Lion of Arthur's Seat, never looking more leonine than from this point; to the west the Highland mountains, scarce visible through the dim light of November; and "the moors and mosses many" of his own Ayrshire he would try, like poor Harley in the "Man of Feeling," to shape to himself in the clouds, and resign the task with a sigh. On his way from Holyrood, with its teeming and tragic stories, he found out the grave of Fergusson, and kneeling down, kissed the sod. According to Allan Cunningham, he visited the shop which had been once that of Allan Ramsay, taking off his hat as he entered; and when afterwards introduced to Creech the bookseller, that knowing worthy remembered he had been in his shop before, inquiring if *that* had been the shop of the author of the "Gentle Shepherd." Still was he almost entirely unknown, and had to retire, grumbling a little and dissatisfied, to his humble bed and companion in the Lawnmarket. No doubt he felt dull enough at times, and as Crabbe, when struggling for subsistence in London, sometimes exclaims, "O, Sally (afterwards Mrs. Crabbe), for you!" so Burns may have often sighed for his Jean, to whom, if she could not soothe, he might at least whisper his sorrows.

Help, however, was near him, and it was to come, after all, from the banks of the Ayr. Worthy Provost Ballantyne was to be the *Deus ex machina*. He had introduced Burns to Dalrymple of Orangefield. Now, the said Dalrymple was one of three gentlemen who had married sisters, all very rich, although all sprung from a poor violer in Ayr called Hugh M'Guire, who had been kind to one MacRae, afterwards Governor MacRae of Madras. He, having no children of his own, adopted those of the humble M'Guire. Lord Glencairn married M'Guire's eldest daughter; Lord Alva, a Lord of Session, married the second; and Dalrymple of Orangefield the third. Thus a chain of patronage was woven for our poet. Dalrymple introduced him to the Dowager Lady Glencairn, and to her amiable son, Lord Glencairn; and through a younger

brother of his, who married the sister of the Earl of Buchan and the famous Henry Erskine, Burns also got into that circle, the most brilliant then in Edinburgh. Mr. Dalziel, Lord Glencairn's factor, had spoken of Burns as the author of the Kilmarnock volume to his lordship. And also, most fortunately, Creech, the sagacious bibliopole, had been the tutor of Glencairn, and the earl introduced our poet to his notice, although, like most booksellers, he was in no hurry to close with him, saying, as an eminent and really excellent bookseller said once, "As to the merit of the book and its interest there can be no doubt; the question of sale is what I have to consider." Within a few days of Burns' arrival in Edinburgh he seems to have met Glencairn and Dalrymple, although where and how is somewhat uncertain. His first interview with Henry Erskine is characteristic. It was at the Canongate Kilwinning Lodge of Freemasons, where Henry Erskine was Past Master. They became intimate in an instant, and although they do not seem to have met very often, their friendship never cooled. It was a singular family that of the Erskines. Lord Buchan was a fool (of some talent); Thomas (Lord) Erskine, was a fool of transcendent forensical genius, whose flights of fancy and eloquence seem absolute inspiration, rivalling those of Curran, and little inferior to Burke's, but who, in private and domestic life, displayed the most reckless imprudence; and Henry was a man of sense, wit, learning, patriotism, and piety. Lord Buchan afterwards, when Burns had gained the shore, encumbered him with some bungling help; but Henry and Glencairn were the real architects of his fortune. Henry Erskine trumpeted his fame in every direction to which his influence as the first lawyer at the bar extended, and Lord Glencairn pledged the Caledonian Hunt, one and all, to subscribe for the second edition; so that, by the 7th December (nine days after his arrival) Burns was able to write to Gavin Hamilton in the following style:—"I am in a fair way of becoming as eminent as Thomas à Kempis or John Bunyan. And you may expect henceforth to see my birthday inserted among the wonderful events in the "Poor Robins" and "Aberdeen Almanacs," along with the "Black Monday" and the "Battle of Bothwell Bridge." And his soul has prophesied truly!

Dugald Stewart, too, was working for him. He had brought his Kilmarnock copy of the poems to Edinburgh and showed it to Henry Mackenzie the "Man of Feeling," (the neglect of whose pathetic and classical works is a disgrace to our age), who from the sofa of the "Lounger," which he then occupied, flung a smile upon it, which was at that time fame. Lord Craig had previously spoken of Michael Bruce's poems in the "Mirror" in a kindly fashion; but Mackenzie, far more eulogistic, dared to mention Burns in the same sentence with Shakspeare, and to call him by a name he has never yet lost, "the heaven-taught ploughman." We question if any Edinburgh critic before or since (always excepting Christopher North) would ever have ventured on such generous audacity. Assuredly Lord Jeffrey never would.

And now the folding-doors of Edinburgh fashionable society were thrown wide open to our Ayrshire Bard, more widely than they were to Dr. Johnson thirteen years before, more widely than (so far as we know) they were to Edmund Burke two years before. Edinburgh had then a grand cluster of literary and other celebrities within its walls. David Hume, indeed, the greatest of them, had been ten years dead; but there were still Hugh Blair, the pleasing critic and smooth sermon-writer; William Robertson, the world-famous historian and powerful Church-leader; Adam Smith; John Home, the popular dramatist; John Erskine, the manly and outspoken Calvinistic divine; John Logan, the poet and popular sermon-writer; Dr. A. Webster, the clerical humorist and founder of the Scottish Clergy's Widows' Fund; Dugald Stewart, the eloquent and accomp'ished philosopher; Henry Mackenzie, the Addison of Scotland. Among the Lords of Session were Lord Kames, the astute critic; Lord Hailes, the learned annalist; Lord Craig, the refined essayist; Lord Auchinleck, best known as having given life to Bozzy, even as Bozzy is best known for having confirmed the immortality of Johnson; and still keeping to a lofty platform, Adam Ferguson, the Roman historian, and Lord Monboddo—whose strange theories, after a century's sterility, seem of late showing symptoms of vitality—dear to Burns, however, not for his original and daring speculations, but as the parent of Miss Burnet, the loveliest vision in female form and actual life which ever flashed on his enraptured eye! In lower regions there were Gilbert Stuart and William Smellie, of the latter of whom we shall hear more hereafter. There were then three ladies of some literary note—Lady Ann Barnard, author of "Auld Robin Gray," Jane Elliot, author of the first, and Mrs. Cockburn, the accomplished author of the second version of the "Flowers of the Forest." These and the others we have already mentioned, Lord Glencairn, Henry Erskine, and the members of the Caledonian Hunt, were among the leading luminaries of Edinburgh society when Burns burst amongst it like a meteor, and continued there till it was discovered that a meteor, when it shines too long, is less useful in a drawing-room than an Argand lamp, and being somewhat wild and lurid withal, had better vanish.

The first impression he made was unprecedented. Within a month of his arrival in Edinburgh he had been at the *routs* of Jane, Duchess of Gordon, who was then the queen of fashionable society, and who said that no conversation had ever so completely carried her away as that of Burns; had attended meetings of the Caledonian Hunt, where Lord Glencairn took him by the hand with an air so

affable, and a smile so kind, that he seemed "to be a stronger proof of the immortality of the soul than any philosopher can furnish—a mind like his can never die" (like Fuseli, who said once to a coxcomb who was denying human immortality, "I don't know if *you* have an immortal soul, but by ——, *I know I have*"); had met with Lord and Lady Betty Cunningham; had got ten guineas anonymously from a gentleman he discovered to be Patrick Miller of Dalswinton, afterwards his landlord; had mingled familiarly with Dr. Robertson, Dr. Blair, Dr. Gregory, Mr. Frazer Tytler, Mr. Mackenzie, and Dr. Adam Ferguson, and had been once or twice at the elegant suppers of Lord Monboddo; and while his lordship was classifying his guest as a very superior offshoot from the ape, Burns was regarding his host's daughter as only a little lower than the angels. Returning from his first visit from Lord Monboddo's house, he was asked, "Did you admire the young lady?" he replied, "I admired God Almighty more than ever; Miss Burnet is the loveliest of all His works!" It was at this time, when the city was all bright and joyful, and full of hope to him, that he wrote his beautiful address to Edinburgh. His honeymoon with her had not yet, but was soon to, come to a close.

There are a hundred testimonies to the power of Burns' talk, to the modesty of his demeanour, and the regularity of his habits at this trying period. His conduct and conversation were equally admired. His manner was modest, yet thoroughly self-possessed; his talk rich, yet well regulated; and whatever he might think in his heart, he seemed always to be rather borrowing light from, than reflecting it on, the luminaries of the metropolis. This was the more edifying as, in reality, he possessed as much talent as any ten of these *litterateurs*, and more genius than all of them put together. Dr. Johnson, in 1774, had frightened and fluttered these Volscians in Corioli, and Burns might have done the same had he not come straight from the plough, and felt the cold shadow of the patronizer over him. And we doubt not that a certain relief from restraint, along with the sense of conscious though curbed superiority, mingled with his feelings as he returned from these splendid suppers to his humble bed in the Lawnmarket* with John Richmond.

Burns' appearance and dress at this time neither added to nor detracted much from the impression he produced. When Scott met him he was dressed like a farmer, who had put on his best to dine with his laird. And, according to other authorities, his best was a suit of blue and buff—the colours of the Whig party, afterwards transferred to the cover of the *Edinburgh Review*—with buckskin breeches and top boots. His hair was tied behind and spread out over the forehead; but he wore no powder, though that was the fashion of the time. We once saw on the street of Dumfries a descendant of his who was said to be a fac-simile of the poet—liker than all the portraits; and he helped us to our idea of Burns as a man of middle stature, seeming so, at least, from a stoop contracted at the plough; with broad brow, rather low and palpitating with thought and suffering; dark eyes, shivering in their great round orbs like the star Venus in the evening, west; with nostril slightly curved upwards, dusky skin (recalling Carlyle's description of Camille Desmoulin's face of "dingy blackguardism, wonderfully irradiated with genius, as though a naphtha lamp burned within it"), thick black hair, and rather indecisive chin and cheek. Burns' conversation will occupy our critical attention afterwards. In Edinburgh he would probably somewhat mitigate the dictatorial tone which Dugald Stewart calls its only fault, and altogether restrain its excesses of humour bordering on riot, and of daring verging on profanity. His address to females—not to ladies merely, but to the sex—was extremely deferential and winning. Probably Dr. Robertson somewhat exaggerates when he says that his conversation was a fuller outcome of his mind than his poetry, which he rated high, and than his letters, which he rated higher. Few will grant this latter statement, and we have our doubts as to the accuracy of the other. The marvel of those literary men could not be altogether explained on the principle implied in Balaam's supposed line addressed to his loquacious ass—

"Mon ane parle, et même il parle bien!

"My ass speaks, and speaks well, too!"

Yet something of this feeling mingled with their appreciation of Burns' talk. Wonderful in itself, it was far more so as coming from a rustic. Perhaps, too, they never thought of measuring themselves with him, or of talking their best before him. They looked on him as a performer on the stage, to whom it was enough that they furnished a cue now and then. Dr. Robertson would as soon have thought of encountering with his eyes those of David Garrick when his transport of divine fury in "Lear" was at the highest, as those of Burns as he was reciting his "Vision" or the "Gloomy night is gathering fast." They admitted, and never thought of contesting, his superiority, just as they would have bowed before some superb specimen of an African lion or Bengalian tiger. Even Burke, the only man then living entitled to take the *pas* of Burns, would have paused before he sought to have a passage of arms with such a prodigy. In one point none of the Edinburgh conversers would have the slightest chance with the Ayrshire Ploughman, and would be always willing to give him his own way; and that was in *feeling*. Henry Mackenzie had put all his pathos in his novels; there was little in his talk, and the others had none. Here Burns was

* Richmond's landlady's name was Carfrae, and he occupied a rather spacious apartment.

unaffectedly and habitually strong. He shed tears when he saw Bunbury's print and read Langhorne's lines, so near was his heart to his eyes; and he had the power of producing tears as easily. Tears are seldom seen in drawing-rooms, and when they do arise, it is usually to the magic of music or song. But Burns' talk was often a sad, sweet melody, and as fraught with genius as with sorrow. It was this which carried the Duchess of Gordon off her feet, and perhaps made other ladies of susceptibility disposed to exclaim as they felt his fascination, like Ada to Cain, when Lucifer was drawing her into his weird suction—

"Save me, save me from him!"

Lockhart's powerful description of Burns' *debut* will occur to our readers. But we do not think it quite so just as it is powerful. It attributes to the Edinburgh magnates a spirit of emulation, if not of envy to Burns, which we believe the abler and better of them never felt, either then or afterwards. John Hume, alone, in one of his letters we remember, speaks of the Ayrshire Ploughman as a popular delusion or *humbug*, from which assuredly the public would one day awaken. In this, however, he was singular and wrong. If the public, and the Edinburgh literati, too, did turn away from Burns for a season, it was owing to other causes than change of mind as to the merits of his poetry, although in this they acted, we think, coldly and unwisely, pushing the ostracism too far. But the former fact has not, we think, been sufficiently noticed by his biographers.

It was not even yet, however, all plain sailing with Burns. He had difficulties about the printing and getting out of his second edition. There is a story told of him calling one day on a printer in Edinburgh, to inquire about the printing of a volume of poems. The printer was not at all prepossessed by his appearance and manner, which were at once plain and a little pretentious, and thought him a cracked poetaster. So he regarded him superciliously, and spoke of receiving guarantees of payment for any such undertaking. Burns went away in high dudgeon; but not till he had taken out of his pocket and poked in the man's nose sundry coins of the realm, to show of course that he was no beggar. Soon after the typographer discovered who his visitor was; and to complete his mortification, when some rural bard from Aberdeenshire called and offered him a volume of poems, he accepted it, and it turned out a total loss.

Burns went, on December 21, to attend a meeting held to celebrate the birthday of Charles Edward. The Jacobite feeling in Scotland had in forty years nearly expired, and so it had in Burns' bosom. He carried only embers to embers, and yet he produced an ode upon the occasion, of which Dr. Currie has preserved a few stanzas. In this incident we see a proof that Burns was already becoming known beyond the fashionable and literary circles of Edinburgh; although it is doubtful if this were altogether an enviable position. It led to encroachments on his time, probably to temptations, and certainly brought him into company not quite worthy of him. On the 13th of January, 1787, we find him at a great Mason-lodge meeting, where the Grand Master proposed his health as Caledonia's Bard, Brother Burns; and he, trembling in every nerve, made the best return in his power, and was consoled, while sitting down amidst the vehement applause of the audience, by overhearing the loud whisper of the Grand Master, "Very well indeed!" How we wish that Wilkie or some other genuine Scottish painter had given us this scene in colours—"Burns at a Grand Mason-lodge Meeting!" Alas! that of this splendid meeting, with all its grand worshipfuls and grand officers, nobles, lawyers, squires, and merchants, that one trembling figure, Brother Burns, sitting down bashful and blushing to the toe-points, and comforted by a friendly compliment accented aloud for his ear, is the only figure that would now be recognized!

In this transition time, between his first arrival in Edinburgh and the publication of his second edition, we notice some pleasing incidents in his history and traits in his character. Still he had not forgotten his true-hearted Ayrshire friends, and might have sung, had he then produced, the beautiful and melting strain—

"Of a' the airts the win' can blaw,
I dearly lo'e the West."

He kept up correspondence with John Ballantyne, Gavin Hamilton, Dr. Mackenzie, and others of his bosom cronies. He wrote also to Mrs. Dunlop, who introduced him, through his writings, to Dr. Moore, famous in his day for his two novels, both of which we happen to have read (few, we suspect, can say so now-a-days)—"Zeluco" and "Edward"—the one a kind of sulphureous Byronic tale, the other a much more pleasing and unpretending production; also, for his "Views of Society and Manners on the Continent," popular, too, once, and legible still, but who is remembered by people now chiefly as the father of Sir John Moore, and the friend of Robert Burns.

Burns gradually surrounded himself, or was surrounded, by a somewhat lower set of associates than the Caledonian Hunt or the Monboddo circle. Perhaps he did this from taste, as Dandie Dinmont preferred the society and viands of Mrs. Allan, Guy Mannering's housekeeper, to those of the Colonel's dining-room; or perhaps he did so to secure greater freedom in his talk and deportment. Among them were men of great ability, such as Willie Nicol of the High School, Nasmyth the painter, and Smellie the printer. Smellie was a very remarkable man, full of various knowledge, particularly in natural history, of rough humour and sagacity—the only man of the circle quite a match for Burns in conversation and repartee.

Burns used a claymore, sometimes a dirk; Smellie wielded a sledge hammer, more formidable and resistless still. In Smellie's forgotten memoirs we find a strange story, which we may quote, as we think it is very little known. Smellie and his friend Greenlaw entered into an agreement, which was reduced to writing, signed with their blood, and formally sealed by both parties, in which they mutually engaged that whoever should die first should return, if possible, and give an account of the world of spirits, under the proviso that if the deceased did not return by the expiration of twelve months, it was to be concluded that he was not permitted to come back. Greenlaw died on the 26th June, 1744. When the year subsequent to his death had nearly expired, Mr. Smellie became exceedingly anxious about the expected visit. After losing several nights' sleep successively in watching for the reappearance of his deceased friend, he fell fast asleep one evening in his elbow chair, when, in a dream, he saw a vision of Greenlaw attired in the usual costume of a ghost. This phantom, addressing him with an impressive solemnity of tone, informed him that he had experienced great difficulty in procuring permission to return to the earth according to their agreement; that he was now in a much better world than the one he had left; and yet that the hopes and wishes of its inhabitants were by no means satisfied, as, like those of the lower world, they still looked forward to the hope of reaching a higher state of existence. Both Smellie and Lord Monboddo, two of the ablest men of the time, were convinced of the supernatural character of this dream. We rather like the theory it implies, of future existence rising in an everlasting series of progression and improvement toward a roofless heaven.

In Smellie's office Burns was a frequent visitor, appeared in his buckskins and buff, cracking his whip and his jests, and had one stool appropriated to him, which, as far down as 1844, was extant, and known as Burns' stool. Sir John Dalrymple (a well-known humorist of that age, author of a very clever *jeu d'esprit* on a "Country House") had one day unwittingly occupied it, and was requested to surrender it to Burns, who stood by unknown to the baronet. "I won't surrender my seat to that impudent, staring fellow." "That 's Burns the Poet." "Good gracious!" said Dalrymple, "give him all the seats in the house!" Smellie introduced Burns to a club called the "Crochallan Fencibles" (Crochallan, from the title of a Gaelic song sung by Douglas the landlord, *Chro Chalein*, "Colin's Cattle" and "Fencibles," from certain regiments bearing his name for fighting in the American war), including Smellie, William Dunbar, W.S., Willie Nicol, and others. Dunbar gave Burns a copy of Spenser's "Faëry Queen," and he undoubtedly would lose no time in plunging amidst the beautiful and mystic mazes of that poem, although we think he would value it less than Shakspeare or Milton, would feel more faith in than love for it, while hope especially would be required to sustain him to the close. He had been rather long in seeking out Blacklock, his generous friend; but found him at last, and greatly enjoyed the warm grasp of his hand (there is none so warm as that of a fine-hearted blind man) and the glimmer of his eyes, which never rolled so much to see the day and the poet's face with it, as now. To Nasmyth he sat for his portrait, which Beugo engraved, and which has been so often reproduced — unquestionably a good likeness, although Scott thinks it less massive than the original. Nasmyth once had dined with Burns; and having both exceeded the bounds of moderation, they agreed not to go to bed, but to make an expedition to the Pentland Hills. On their way, hearing a loud noise in a cottage, and entering in, they found a man who had suddenly been bereft of his reason. The effect of the cries and gestures of the lunatic upon Burns' nerves, somewhat shattered by the revel of the previous night, was appalling. After rambling all night they returned to Roslin to breakfast, which the hostess (a Mrs. David Wilson) supplied in the old Scotch style; and Burns, in his gratitude, scrawled on the reverse side of a wooden platter the verses—

"My blessings on you, honest wife,
I ne'er was here before,
You've walth o' gear for spoon and knife;
Heart could not wish for more.

Heaven keep you clear of sturt and strife,
Till far ayont four score;
And by the Lord o' death and life,
I'll ne'er gae by your door."

The Second Edition at last appeared in 1787. It was prefaced by a dedication to the Caledonian Hunt, and followed by a list of subscribers amounting to 1500 names, and accounting for 2800 copies. It was the first copy of Burns we ever read, when eight or nine years old, is a large thick octavo, and is for the age beautifully got up and printed. We met it again lately, and find among the list of subscribers (besides those enumerated by Chambers, which are chiefly nobility and gentry) the following distinguished names:—Miss Burnet, Dr. Blair, Dr. Blacklock, Dr. Black, Mr. Brougham of Brougham Hall (Lord Brougham's father), Rev. George Baird (afterwards Principal Baird), David Bridges,* John Clerk (Lord Eldin), Dr. Carlyle, (Jupiter Carlyle of Inveresk), Dr. Cullen, Alexander Wood, Professor Dalziel, Henry Erskine, Dr. Gregory, Lord Hailes, Malcolm Laing, Adam of the High

* Father of old David Bridges, "Director-General of the Fine Arts," as the Blackwood wags christened him, a singularly smart and sagacious man, famous for his pun at a masquerade. To one who asked him, "Mr. Bridges, on which of the bridges do you collect the pontage?" "On the *Pons Asinorum*, sir; fools and asses pass free; you may go on, sir."

School, Dr. Adam Ferguson, historian of Rome, Dr. Robertson, historian of Scotland, Dr. Henry, historian of England, Rev. Henry Hunter, afterwards of London Wall (translator of "Paul and Virginia," author of "Sermons"), Rev. Mr. Greenfield (father of Lord Rutherford, who had to flee from Edinburgh owing to a frightful scandal, and was thought long by some the author of the Waverley Novels), Dugald Stewart, Henry Mackenzie, Adam Smith, Gilbert Burns, besides other names, some from the Colonies, the Continent, and America, a good many from England, the most from Glasgow and the west of Scotland. In this new edition Burns inserted a number of pieces, some old, but which he had not previously ventured to print; such as "Death and Dr. Hornbook," "The Ordination," "The Unco Guid," "John Barleycorn," and a few other small poems and songs. The "Brigs of Ayr," "Tam Samson's Elegy," "A Fragment," and an "Address to Edinburgh," had been composed since his first volume appeared, but were now published for the first time in the second. It was received with enthusiasm, and perhaps more warmly welcomed in the Modern Athens than any volume of poems had hitherto been, or was to be, till "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," eighteen years after. Burns had written some lines intended to be inserted under the Earl of Glencairn's picture, and requested permission to print them in the new volume; but for whatever reason the lines do not appear. The price was five shillings. The Caledonian Hunt took one hundred copies at a guinea the copy; Creech took five hundred copies (for sale, of course); the Earl of Eglinton took forty-two copies; the Duchess of Gordon, twenty-one; Robert Muir of Kilmarnock, forty. Some Scottish Colleges abroad also subscribed.

Accounts of Burns' private bearing at this time abound from various writers, ranging from Professor Walker to Sir Walter Scott. We knew Professor Walker in our boyhood, attended his Humanity or Latin class in Glasgow, and received kindness from him. He was a man of very considerable learning, classical taste, and a warm heart. He had, however, a certain degree of pedantry and *petit maitreship* about him, and had been rather spoiled by acting as a tutor in some noble families. To tutors, as a rule then, the frivolities and conventionalisms of the great were sure to adhere, along with a portion of the polish. His measurement of Burns at this period is more that of a martinet than of a manly critic. Hear this, for instance. "His eye was full of mind, and would have been singularly expressive under the *management* of one who could employ it with more art for the purpose of expression." Think of managing by art the expression of two eyes which were compared to two chariot lamps flaming on through a dark night! Manage the eye of Mars as we have seen him this year (1877), glaring fiery red and large as Jove, across a narrow gulf, at Saturn! Professor Wilson has dwelt with merciless force on some similar platitudes in Walker's description of his interview with Burns at Dumfries. Still Walker loved Burns, and speaks of him always with respect as well as affection. He saw his faults; but he evidently regarded him as a man of sterling worth, as well as of transcendent genius, although he had not cultivated the graces under the Duchess of Athole, nor studied the humanities under the amiable and learned Josiah Walker, author of the "Defence of Order" (mercilessly mangled and reduced to chaos by Lord Brougham in the *Edinburgh Review*), and who was better at defending the order of his country than maintaining that of his class. Peace to his memory! We see still his big burly brow, his tall erect figure, his solemn spectacles, his formal manners, disguising an excellent disposition and a very upright character; and hear him still reading to his class (which was that morning supplemented by the presence of Thomas Campbell, then Lord Rector of Glasgow University) a lecture on "Poetry," of great polish and erudition. He wrote "The Defence of Order," a "Life of Burns," and "The Vision of Liberty." He was the Professor, Burns was the Poet, of Humanity.

Walker touches tenderly here on Burns' frailties, although he memorizes the fact that when Burns, at Dr. Blair's table, was asked to name the public place where he had got the most gratification, he named the High Church, and Mr. Walker, the colleague of his entertainer—an excellent preacher doubtless, but whom Dr. Blair naturally rated less highly than himself. Burns probably perceived his mistake in a moment in the astonishment of the company and the silence of his host, but with admirable prudence never alluded to it till years had elapsed, when he expressed to the worthy tutor of Athole his poignant regret. On another occasion he called a clergyman a —— blockhead for first abusing and then misquoting Gray's "Elegy" —"a piece of insolence unpardonable," quoth Christopher North, "at such an early meal as breakfast." These were *lapsus linguæ*. But Dugald Stewart, a higher authority than Josiah Walker, assures us that Burns' conduct and conversation were all that could be wished, that his sense of religion was then very strong; and though he did hear rumours of indulgence and low society, he saw nothing in his own experience but temperance and decorum. Indeed, Burns told him that the weakness of his stomach was such as to deprive him of all merit in his sobriety. It is curious, however, that we never hear of this weakness again till near his end, nor had heard of it before. It was probably brought on by his change of diet in Edinburgh.

Scott's description is too well known to need quotation. Langhorne, the author of the lines which made Burns weep, and which Scott recognized as his, preached in Lincoln's inn Chapel, and besides being popular with

the intellectual class among whom he laboured, wrote some well-known works, such as a translation of "Plutarch's Lives" and "The Country Justice," containing the lines referred to. All that Burns said to Scott, after his modest interference, was, "Ye'll be *a man yet*," but it fell like a drop of poetic baptism on his brow.

Robert Chambers thinks that Edinburgh did as much for Burns as might have been expected; and yet it amounted only to the paltry sum of £500. He said they did not appreciate Burns so highly as we do, and that the sum raised was very respectable from their point of view. We are forcibly reminded of Burns' own words anent Fergusson—

"A curse upon your whunstane hearts,
Ye Embrugh gentry;
A tithe of what ye waste on cartes (*cards*),
Wad stowed his pantry"

The Edinburgh people appreciated Burns intellectually well enough. They gave him plenty of claret and praise; but he could well have wanted a moiety of the first, and the second, even when it was not sheer flummery, did him more harm than good. But they gave him little solid cash, found for him no congenial position, and what was worse, he got accustomed while amongst them to habits and society which unfitted him for the drudgeries and companionships of a country life. To return from venison and champagne to "haggis" and "tippenny;" from the society of Dugald Stewart, Archibald Alison, and Lord Glencairn, to "slee Jamie Smith" and rattling John Rankin; and from Eliza Burnet and the Duchess of Gordon to Jean Armour and Elizabeth Black—was a downcome. To alter what Carlyle says of Edward Irving—"Edinburgh forgot this man, who, alas! could not in his turn forget." We may apply to poor Burns the words of Cowper to the gentle savage, "Omai," who after visiting London, and being admitted to its best society, had to return to his native isles:—

'The dream is past, and thou hast found again
Thy cocoas and bananas, palms and yams,
And homestead thatched with leaves; but hast thou found
Their former charms? and having seen our state,
Our palaces, our ladies, and our pomp
Of equipage, our gardens and our sports,
And heard our music, are thy simple friends,
Thy simple fare, and all thy plain delights
As dear to thee as once?"

There was this difference: "Omai" probably wondered that he, a simple savage, should ever have been admitted among society so superior. But Burns had learned in Edinburgh, if he had not learned before, that he was one of Nature's nobility—equal, and more than equal, to the men he met there; and knew that they were to continue to fatten on a birthright he had lost by no fault of his as yet, while he was to be driven away to herd with an inferior grade the rest of his life. If he was too proud for a pension, was there no post they could have found for him of a semi-literary cast? no secretaryship in the then University, like that which broke the fall and made the little fortune of Alexander Smith? no teaching situation in one of their academies or schools? no position in which he might have prosecuted his studies, and obtained a competence, with the hope, too, of rising to a situation better adapted for his extraordinary powers? Perhaps it is too extravagant to think of a plan being started and funds being raised for sending Robert Burns to College. Yet men long after his time of life (twenty-nine) have been sent there, and have profited mightily by their mature studies. Scott, who knew Edinburgh well, speaks of the efforts made to help Burns as extremely trifling. Alas! we fear that the Coleridgean chaplet of henbane, nettles, night-shade, and other dung-hill weeds and flowers of darkness, must continue to adorn

"The illustrious brow of Scotch nobility."

If this be called inconsistent with what we previously said about his Edinburgh patrons being induced to withdraw from Burns by rumours affecting his morals, it will be noticed that we stated, without wholly defending, their conduct in this matter. Besides, his behaviour at first in Edinburgh was irreproachable, and it was then especially that they were called upon to do something effectual in his behalf.

Many of the friendships Burns formed in Edinburgh he believed to be very fragile, and they proved so. There was one valuable one, however—his connection with Robert Ainslie. This gentleman survived Burns long, and became a worthy Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh, an elder in the Church of Scotland, and, we think, the author of a little religious *brochure* once very popular in Scotland—"A Father's Gift to his Children." In his youthful days he was gay and gamesome as a young buck, acting as an apprentice to a Mr. Samuel Mitchelson, a writer in Carrubbers Close, an acquaintance of Smollett's—about twenty years of age when Burns first knew him, and distinguished by his bonhomie and kind-heartedness, as well as by his young literary enthusiasm. Burns and he became very intimate. Probably they often heard together the chimes of midnight, but one anecdote is very creditable to the temperance of both. Burns called on Ainslie one spring afternoon. Ainslie produced a bottle of excellent wine. Burns exclaimed, "We don't require any artificial stimulus to sharpen our wits," and proposed a walk to Arthur's Seat; and Ainslie used to declare that he never found the poet more delightful than during that walk and the sober tea-drinking which followed. Burns was now revolving a visit to the South, and Robert Ainslie, a native of Berwickshire, agreed to go along with him.

CHAPTER IX.

BURNS IN THE SOUTH, WEST, AND NORTH.

BURNS, ere leaving Edinburgh, had got acquainted with James Johnson, an engraver, who was already projecting his "Museum of Scottish Songs," with their appropriate tunes, to which the Poet became a contributor, sending him "Green Grows the Rashes" and "Young Peggy blooms the fairest Lass."

He left Edinburgh 5th May, 1787, along with Ainslie, for Berrywell, near Dunse, where the father of the latter, land-steward to Lord Douglas, resided. He travelled on horseback, and had just mounted when a letter was shot into his hand from Dr. Blair (which will be found in the Correspondence). It is kind, but formal and stilted. It recommends Burns to take time and leisure to mature and improve his talents, "for on any second production you give to the world your fate as a poet will very much depend." Burns laughed, thrust the letter into his pocket, and exclaimed, "Thank you, doctor; but whiles a man's first book, like his first bairn, is his best." It was, in fact, Burns' first and last book. He was constantly adding to it, and new editions of it were issued, but no supplementary volume ever appeared in his lifetime.

Perhaps the moment when Burns mounted his horse for the South may be called his completed culmination. He was leaving Edinburgh triumphant in literary success, and outwardly unstained, respected, and beloved by several circles—leaving it a free, unfettered man, with a little money in his pocket, a kindred spirit by his side, the lands of Scottish romance and poetry before him, and the blue sky of early summer above him, reflecting the joy of his bosom; and he felt with George Herbert as if

> "There was no month but May."

Ayrshire, with all its sorrows and humiliations, was far distant. And yet now and then as he rode gaily along, and, like the Canterbury Pilgrims, carolled as he pursued his way, his prophetic soul might whisper to him that, though the main wing of the storm was scattered—

> "The sullen rear
> Was, with its stored thunder, labouring up."

He was carrying his temperament, his pride, his passions, as well as his genius and his prestige, with him to the South; and if with the latter there was great glory, with the former there was danger equally great. He was ostensibly in this journey a farmer in search of a farm; less ostensibly, he was a "Cœlebs in search of a wife," and we find him more than once on the point of finding, or rather being found of, one. But his matrimonial destiny did not lie—perhaps it had been better had it lain—in the South.

We quote here the "Journal" as far as Carlisle, and append a few remarks:—

"Left Edinburgh (*May* 5, 1787)—Lammermuir hills miserably dreary, but at times very picturesque. Langtonedge, a glorious view of the Merse; reach Berrywell. Old Mr. Ainslie an uncommon character—his hobbies, agriculture, natural philosophy, and politics. In the first he is unexceptionably the clearest-headed, best-informed man I ever met with; in the other two, very intelligent. As a man of business he has uncommon merit, and by fairly deserving it has made a very decent independence. Mrs. Ainslie, an excellent, sensible, cheerful, amiable old woman.* Miss Ainslie—her person a little *embonpoint*, but handsome; her face, particularly her eyes, full of sweetness and good-humour; she unites three qualities rarely to be found together—keen, solid observation; sly witty observation and remark; and the gentlest, most unaffected female modesty. Douglas, a clever, fine, promising young fellow. The family-meeting with their brother, my *compagnon de voyage*, very charming—particularly the sister. The whole family remarkably attached to their menials: Mrs. A. full of stories of the sagacity and sense of the little girl in the kitchen. Mr.

* The account of the Ainslie family is not more flattering than we believe true. Of Rachel's fate we know nothing, but that she died in single blessedness. Her brother Robert had several daughters and a son. His eldest daughter was very beautiful, and married, we believe, a Dr. Farquharson of Edinburgh. His younger, Esther, married the Rev. John Robertson, Secession minister of Dunse. She had been originally engaged to Swinton of Swinton, Berwickshire, who died before marriage. Before marriage she kept the house of Douglas Ainslie of Cairnbank, near Dunse, who was a writer, and factor for many estates in the county, made a great deal of money, and left it partly to Esther and partly to a nephew, Sir Douglas Ainslie, whose only child is now Mrs. Grant Duff. Chambers says that Robert Ainslie, whom he met often, always spoke of Burns with the greatest affection, as the finest fellow as well as the greatest genius he ever knew.

A. high in the praises of an African, his house-servant; all his people old in his service. Douglas's old nurse came to Berrywell yesterday to remind them of its being his birthday.

"A Mr. Dudgeon,* a poet at times, a worthy, remarkable character — natural penetration, a great deal of information, some genius, and extreme modesty.

"*Sunday* (*May* 6)—Went to church at Dunse—Dr. Bowmaker, a man of strong lungs and pretty judicious remark; but ill-skilled in propriety, and altogether unconscious of his want of it.

"*Monday* (*May* 7)—Coldstream — went over to England—Cornhill—glorious river Tweed—clear and majestic—fine bridge.

"Dine at Coldstream† with Mr. Ainslie and Mr. Foreman; beat Mr. F. in a dispute about Voltaire. Tea at Lennel House with Mr. Brydone. ‡ Mr. Brydone a most excellent heart, kind, joyous, and benevolent, but a good deal of the French indiscriminate complaisance—from his situation, past and present, an admirer of everything that bears a splendid title or that possesses a large estate. Mrs. Brydone § a most elegant woman in her person and manners, the tones of her voice remarkably sweet; my reception extremely flattering. Sleep at Coldstream.

"*Tuesday* (*May* 8) — Breakfast at Kelso—charming situation of Kelso—fine bridge over the Tweed—enchanting views and prospects on both sides of the river, particularly the Scotch side; introduced to Mr. Scott of the Royal Bank, an excellent, modest fellow—fine situation of it—ruins of Roxburgh Castle—a holly-bush growing where James II. of Scotland was accidentally killed by the bursting of a cannon. A small old religious ruin and a fine old garden planted by the religious, rooted out and destroyed by an English Hottentot—a *maître d'hotel* of the duke's, a Mr. Cole. Climate and soil of Berwickshire, and even Roxburghshire, superior to Ayrshire—bad roads. Turnip and sheep husbandry, their great improvements. Mr. M'Dowal at Caverton Mill, a friend of Mr. Ainslie's, with whom I dined to-day, sold his sheep, ewe and lamb together, at two guineas a piece. Wash their sheep before shearing—seven or eight pounds of washing wool in a fleece — low markets, consequently low rents — fine lands not above sixteen shillings a Scotch acre—magnificence of farmers and farm-houses. Come up Teviot and up Jed to Jedburgh to lie, and so wish myself a good-night.

Wednesday (*May* 9)—Breakfast with Mr. —— in Jedburgh—a squabble between Mrs. ——, a crazed, talkative slattern, and a sister of her's, an old maid, respecting a Relief minister. Miss gives Madam the lie; and Madam, by way of revenge, upbraids her that she laid snares to entangle the said minister, then a widower, in the net of matrimony. Go about two miles out of Jedburgh to a roup of parks—meet a polite soldier-like gentleman, Captain Rutherford, who had been many years through the wilds of America, a prisoner among the Indians. Charming, romantic situation of Jedburgh, with gardens, orchards, &c., intermingled among the houses—fine old ruins—a once magnificent cathedral and strong castle. All the towns here have the appearance of old, rude grandeur, but the people extremely idle—Jed, a fine romantic little river.

"Dine with Captain Rutherford—the captain a polite fellow, fond of money in his farming way; showed a particular respect to my lardship—his lady, exactly a proper matrimonial second part for him. Miss Rutherford, a beautiful girl.

"Return to Jedburgh—walk up Jed with some ladies, to be shown Love Lane and Blackburn, two fairy scenes. Introduced to Mr. Potts, writer, a very clever fellow; and Mr. Somerville, the clergyman of the place, a man and a gentleman, but sadly addicted to punning. ‖ The walking party of ladies, Mrs. —— and Miss —— her sister, before mentioned. *N.B.*—These two appear still more comfortably ugly and stupid, and bore me most shockingly. Two Miss —— tolerably agreeable. Miss Hope, a tolerably pretty girl, fond of laughing and fun. Miss Lindsay, a good-humoured, amiable girl; rather short *et embonpoint*, but handsome, and extremely graceful; beautiful hazel eyes, full of spirit, and sparkling with delicious moisture; an engaging face, *un tout ensemble* that speaks her of the first order of female minds; her sister, a bonnie, strappin', rosy, sonsie lass. Shake myself loose, after several unsuccessful efforts, of Mrs. —— and Miss ——, and, somehow or other, get hold of Miss

* Dudgeon was the author of the once popular song—"Up amang yon cliffy rocks."

† It was at Coldstream that the famous scene described by Ainslie occurred. Ainslie suggested that they should cross the Tweed, and then Burns could say he had been in England. They did so, and were walking slowly along, when suddenly Burns, to Mr. Ainslie's great surprise, threw off his hat, knelt down, and lifted up his hands and in an attitude and tones of the greatest enthusiasm, looking the while back to Scotland, proceeded to repeat the last stanzas in the "Cottar's Saturday Night"—

"O Scotia, my dear, my native soil," &c.

‡ Brydone, the traveller, who was once tabooed for holding what is now the general opinion about the Mosaic account of the creation. His book of travels contains a very pleasant narrative of adventures in Sicily and Malta, including an account of an ascent of Mount Etna, and may even yet be perused with gratification.

§ Daughter of Dr. Robertson the historian.

‖ Dr. Somerville was father-in-law of the distinguished Mary Somerville, afterwards Madame Greg. A gentleman met her in her second marriage time, and after talk, said, "The most brilliant woman I ever met except Mary Somerville," and was told to his surprise she was Mary Somerville! Dr. Somerville's "Memoirs of Our Own Times" have been some time since published. He wrote also a "History of England" during the reigns of William and Anne. He never punned, it is said, after reading the above. He lived to a great age. We think we have read a reply to Tom Paine's "Rights of Man" from his pen.

Lindsay's arm. My heart is thawed into melting pleasure after being so long frozen up in the Greenland bay of indifference, amid the noise and nonsense of Edinburgh. Miss seems very well pleased with my bardship's distinguishing her; and after some slight qualms, which I could easily mark, she sets the titter round at defiance, and kindly allows me to keep my hold; and when parted by the ceremony of my introduction to Mr. Somerville, she met me half, to resume my situation. *Nota Bene.*—The poet within a point and a half of being ——— in love; I am afraid my bosom is still nearly as much tinder as ever.

"The old, cross-grained, Whiggish, ugly, slanderous Miss ——, with all the poisonous spleen of a disappointed, ancient maid, stops me very unseasonably to ease her bursting breast, by falling abusively foul on the Miss Lindsays, particularly on my Dulcinea; I hardly refrain from cursing her to her face for daring to mouth her calumnious slander on one of the finest pieces of the workmanship of Almighty Excellence! Sup at Mr. ——'s; vexed that the Miss Lindsays are not of the supper party, as they only are wanting. Mrs. —— and Miss —— still improve infernally on my hands.

"Set out next morning for Wauchope, the seat of my correspondent, Mrs. Scott—breakfast by the way with Dr. Elliot, an agreeable, good-hearted, climate-beaten old veteran, in the medical line, now retired to a romantic, but rather moorish place, on the banks of the Rule—he accompanies us almost to Wauchope; we traverse the country to the top of Bochester, the scene of an old encampment, and Woolee Hill.*

"Wauchope.—Mr. Scott exactly the figure and face commonly given to Sancho Panza; very shrewd in his farming matters, and not unfrequently stumbles on what may be called a strong thing rather than a good thing. Mrs. Scott all the sense, taste, intrepidity of face, and bold, critical decision, which usually distinguish female authors. Sup with Mr. Potts—agreeable party. Breakfast next morning with Mr. Somerville—the *bruit* of Miss Lindsay and my bardship, by means of the invention and malice of Miss ——. Mr. Somerville sends to Dr. Lindsay, begging him and family to breakfast if convenient, but at all events to send Miss Lindsay;† accordingly, Miss Lindsay only comes. I find Miss Lindsay would soon play the devil with me; I met with some little flattering attentions from her. Mrs. Somerville, an excellent, motherly, agreeable woman, and a fine family. Mr. Ainslie and Mrs. S ——, junr., with Mr. ——, Miss Lindsay, and myself, go to see *Esther* [Easton], a very remarkable woman for reciting poetry of all kinds, and sometimes making Scotch doggerel herself—she can repeat by heart almost everything she has ever read, particularly Pope's 'Homer' from end to end; has studied Euclid by herself; and, in short, is a woman of very extraordinary abilities. On conversing with her, I find her fully equal to the character given of her. She is very much flattered that I send for her, and that she sees a poet who has put out a book, as she says. She is, among other things, a great florist, and is rather past the meridian of once celebrated beauty.

"I walk in *Esther's* garden with Miss Lindsay, and after some little chit-chat of the tender kind, I presented her with a proof print of my *nob*, which she accepted with something more tender than gratitude. She told me many little stories which Miss —— had retailed concerning her and me with prolonging pleasure—God bless her! Was waited on by the magistrates, and presented with the freedom of the burgh.‡

"Took farewell of Jedburgh, with some melancholy, disagreeable sensations. Jed, pure be thy crystal streams, and hallowed be thy sylvan banks! Sweet Isabella Lindsay, may peace dwell in thy bosom, uninterrupted except by the tumultuous throbbings of rapturous love! That love-kindling eye must beam on another, not on me; that graceful form must bless another's arms, not mine!

"Kelso.—Dine with the Farmers' Club—all gentlemen, talking of high matters; each of them keeps a hunter from £30 to £50 value, and attends the fox-huntings in the county. Go out with Mr. Ker, one of the club, and a friend of Mr. Ainslie's, to lie. Mr. Ker, a most gentlemanly, clever, handsome fellow, a widower with some fine children; his mind and manner astonishingly like my dear old friend Robert Muir in Kilmarnock; everything in Mr. Ker's most elegant; he offers to accompany me in my English tour. Dine with Sir Alexander Don,§ a pretty clever fellow, but far from being a match for his divine lady. A very wet day. . . . Sleep at Stodrig again, and set out for Melrose; visit Dryburgh, a fine old ruined abbey; still bad weather; cross Leader, and come up Tweed to Melrose; dine there, and visit that far-famed, glorious ruin; come to Selkirk, up Ettrick; the whole country hereabout, both on Tweed and Ettrick, remarkably stony.‖

* Mrs. Scott of Wauchope, whose poetical correspondence will be found elsewhere in the Poetry.

† Isabella Lindsay, who so fascinated the bard, and who was a most amiable woman, was married to Mr. Adam Armstrong, who held some post under the Russian Government. She died young, leaving four children. Her youngest son was director of the Royal Mint at St. Petersburg.

‡ The usual "riddle of Claret" was presented to Burns; he insisted on paying it himself, but was overruled.

§ Sir Alexander Don's "divine lady" was Lady Harriett Don, sister of the Earl of Glencairn.

‖ Dr. Clarkson, of Selkirk, along with two other gentlemen, were sitting in Veitch's inn at Selkirk when Ainslie and Burns arrived "like twa drookit craws." The travellers soon after sent Veitch in to ask them to take a glass with them. The Doctor objected, and asked Mr. Veitch what like the men were? Mr. Veitch said, "he could

"*Monday* (*May* 14).—Come to Inverleithen, a famous spa, and in the vicinity of the palace of Traquair, where, having dined, and drank some Galloway-whey, I here remain till to-morrow; saw Elibanks and Elibraes, on the other side of the Tweed.*

"*Tuesday.*—Drank tea yesternight at Pirn with Mr. Horsburgh. Breakfasted to-day with Mr. Ballantyne of Hollylee. Proposal for a four-horse team, to consist of Mr. Scott of Wauchope, Fittieland; Logan of Logan, Fittiefur; Ballantyne of Hollylee, Forewynd; Horsburgh of Horsburgh. Dine at a country inn, kept by a miller, in Earlston, the birthplace and residence of the celebrated Thomas à Rhymer—saw the ruins of his castle—come to Berrywell.

"*Wednesday.*—Dine at Dunse with the Farmers' Club—company, impossible to do them justice—Rev. Mr. Smith, a famous punster, and Mr. Meikle, a celebrated mechanic, and inventor of the thrashing-mill. *Thursday*, breakfast at Berrywell, and walk into Dunse to see a famous knife made by a cutler there, and to be presented to an Italian prince. A pleasant ride with my friend Mr. Robert Ainslie and his sister to Mr. Thomson's, a man who has newly commenced farmer, and has married a Miss Patty Grieve, formerly a flame of Mr. Robert Ainslie's. Company, Miss Jacky Grieve, an amiable sister of Mrs. Thomson's, and Mr. Hood, an honest, worthy, facetious farmer in the neighbourhood.

"*Friday.*—Ride to Berwick—an idle town, rudely picturesque. Meet Lord Errol in walking round the walls; his lordship's flattering notice of me. Dine with Mr. Clunzie, merchant; nothing particular in company or conversation. Come up a bold shore, and over a wild country, to Eyemouth; sup and sleep at Mr. Grieve's.

"*Saturday.*—Spend the day at Mr. Grieve's; made a royal-arch mason of St. Abb's Lodge. Mr. William Grieve, the eldest brother, a joyous, warm-hearted, jolly, clever fellow—takes a hearty glass, and sings a good song. Mr. Robert, his brother and partner in trade, a good fellow, but says little. Take a sail after dinner. Fishing of all kinds pays tithes at Eyemouth.

"*Sunday* (*May* 20).—A Mr. Robertson, brewer at Ednam, sets out with us to Dunbar.

"The Miss Grieves very good girls. My bardship's heart got a brush from Miss Betsy.

"Mr. William Grieve's attachment to the family-circle; so fond, that when he is out, which, by the by, is often the case, he cannot go to bed till he sees if all his sisters are sleeping well. Pass the famous Abbey of Coldingham, and Pease-bridge. Call at Mr. Sheriff's, where Mr. A. and I dine. Mr. S. talkative and conceited. I talk of love to Nancy the whole evening, while her brother escorts home some companions like himself. Sir James Hall† of Dunglass, having heard of my being in the neighbourhood, comes to Mr. Sheriff's to breakfast; takes me to see his fine scenery on the stream of Dunglass—Dunglass the most romantic sweet place I ever saw—Sir James and his lady a pleasant happy couple. He points out a walk for which he has an uncommon respect, as it was made by an aunt of his, to whom he owes much.

"Miss —— will accompany me to Dunbar, by way of making a parade of me as a sweetheart of hers among her relations. She mounts an old cart-horse, as huge and as lean as a house; a rusty old side-saddle without girth or stirrup, but fastened on with an old pillion-girth—herself as fine as hands could make her, in cream-coloured riding-clothes, hat and feather, &c. I, ashamed of my situation, ride like the devil, and almost shake her to pieces on old Jolly—get rid of her by refusing to call at her uncle's with her.

"Passed through the most glorious corn country I ever saw till I reach Dunbar, a neat little town. Dine with Provost Fall, an eminent merchant, and most respectable character, but undescribable, as he exhibits no marked traits. Mrs. Fall a genius in painting; fully more clever in the fine arts and sciences than my friend Lady Wauchope,‡ without her consummate assurance of her own abilities. Call with Mr. Robinson (whom, by the by, I find to be a worthy, much respected man, very modest; warm, social heart, which with less good sense than his would be, perhaps, with the children of prim precision and pride, rather inimical to that respect which is man's due from man)—with him I call on Miss Clarke, a maiden, in the Scotch phrase, *guid enough, but no brent new;* a clever woman, with tolerable pretensions to remark and wit, while time had blown the blushing bud of bashful modesty into the flower of easy confidence. She wanted to see what sort of *raree show* an author was; and to let him know that though Dunbar was but a little town, yet it was not destitute of people of parts.

"Breakfast next morning at Skateraw, at Mr. Lee's, a farmer of great note. Mr. Lee, an excellent, hospitable, social fellow, rather oldish—warm-hearted and chatty—a most judicious, sensible farmer. Mr. Lee detains me till next morning. Company at dinner; my rev. acquaintance, Dr. Bowmaker, a rattling old fellow. Two sea lieu-

hardly say; that the one spoke rather like a gentleman, but the other was a drover-like chap." So they refused to admit them. It was not till after three days that Clarkson discovered that he had *cut* Burns, and he never forgave himself for it till his dying day! While sitting in Selkirk inn Burns wrote a letter to Creech, including a clever copy of verses, entitled "Willie's Awa'."

* Burns seems to have taken some detours of considerable length to Inverleithen and Earlston, to see the "Bush aboon Traquair," Elibank, the Cowdenknowes, and other spots famous in the history of Scottish song.

† Sir James Hall of Dunglass was father of the famous Basil Hall.

‡ Mrs. Scott.

tenants; a cousin of the landlord's, a fellow whose looks are of that kind which deceived me in a gentleman at Kelso, and have often deceived me: a goodly handsome figure and face, which incline one to give them credit for parts which they have not. Mr. Clarke a much cleverer fellow, but whose looks a little cloudy, and his appearance rather ungainly, with an everyday observer may prejudice the opinion against him. Dr. Brown, a medical young gentleman from Dunbar, a fellow whose face and manners are open and engaging. Leave Skateraw for Dunse next day, along with Collector ——, a lad of slender abilities, and bashfully diffident to an extreme.

"Found Miss Ainslie—the amiable, the sensible, the good-humoured, the sweet Miss Ainslie—all alone at Berrywell. Heavenly Powers, who know the weakness of human hearts, support mine! What happiness must I see, only to remind me that I cannot enjoy it!

"Lammermuir Hills, from East Lothian to Dunse, very wild. Dine with the Farmers' Club at Kelso. Sir John Hume and Mr. Lumsden there; but nothing worth remembrance when the following circumstance is considered: I walk into Dunse before dinner, and out to Berrywell in the evening with Miss Ainslie; how well-bred, how frank, how good she is! Charming Rachel! may thy bosom never be wrung by the evils of this life of sorrows, or by the villany of this world's sons!*

"*Thursday* (*May* 24).—Mr. Ker and I set out to dinner at Mr. Hood's, on our way to England.

"I am taken extremely ill with strong feverish symptoms, and take a servant of Mr. Hood's to watch me all night; embittering remorse scares my fancy at the gloomy forebodings of death. I am determined to live for the future in such a manner as not to be scared at the approach of death; I am sure I could meet him with indifference, but for 'the something beyond the grave.' Mr. Hood agrees to accompany us to England if we will wait till Sunday.

"*Friday.*—I go with Mr. Hood to see a roup of an unfortunate farmer's stock; rigid economy and decent industry, do you preserve me from being the principal *dramatis persona* in such a scene of horror!

"Meet my good old friend Mr. Ainslie, who calls on Mr. Hood in the evening to take farewell of my bardship. This day I feel myself warm with sentiments of gratitude to the Great Preserver of men, who has kindly restored me to health and strength once more.

"A pleasant walk with my young friend Douglas Ainslie—a sweet, modest, clever young fellow.

"*Sunday* (*May* 27).—Cross Tweed, and traverse the moors through a wild country till I reach Alnwick—Alnwick Castle, a seat of the Duke of Northumberland, furnished in a most princely manner. A Mr. Wilkin, agent of his Grace's, shows us the house and policies. Mr. Wilkin a discreet, sensible, ingenious man.

"*Monday.*—Come, still through by-ways, to Warkworth, where we dine. Hermitage an old castle. Warkworth situated very picturesquely, with Coquet Island, a small rocky spot, the seat of an old monastery, facing it a little in the sea, and the small but romantic river Coquet running through it. Sleep at Morpeth, a pleasant enough little town, and on next day to Newcastle. Meet with a very agreeable sensible fellow, a Mr. Chattox, who shows us a great many civilities, and who dines and sups with us.

"*Wednesday.*—Left Newcastle early in the morning, and rode over a fine country to Hexham to breakfast; from Hexham to Wardrew, the celebrated spa, where we slept. *Thursday* (*May* 31).—Reach Longtown to dine, and part there with my good friends, Messrs. Hood and Ker. A hiring day in Longtown. I am uncommonly happy to see so many young folks enjoying life. I come to Carlisle. (Meet a strange enough romantic adventure by the way, in falling in with a girl and her married sister. The girl, after some overtures of gallantry on my side, sees me a little cut with the bottle, and offers to take me in for a Gretna-green affair. I, not being quite such a gull as she imagines, make an appointment with her, by way of *vive la bagatelle*, to hold a conference on it when we reach town. I meet her in town, and give her a brush of caressing and a bottle of cider; but finding herself *un peu trompée* in her man, she sheers off). Next day (*June* 1) I meet my good friend Mr. Mitchell, and walk with him round the town and its environs, and through his printing-works, &c.—four or five hundred people employed, many of them women and children. Dine with Mr. Mitchell, and leave Carlisle. Come by the coast to Annan. Overtaken on the way by a curious old fish of a shoemaker, and miner from Cumberland mines."

From Carlisle he went to Annan, and then to Dumfries and Dalswinton, where he saw some of Patrick Miller's farms, but as yet took none of them. He came thence by Sanquhar to Mauchline, and reached Mossgiel and his relatives on the 9th June, all at once, as if he had dropped from the clouds. Their words were quiet and few; their emotions too deep for their words or tears. "Oh, Robert!" his mother exclaimed. What these words said, and what they left unsaid! How often they had all sighed—

> "O for him back again,
> We wish we had him back again!"

And here, back again, "rantin', rovin' Robin" was once more. He called next on the Armours, and was received, he thought, with an excess of servility which disgusted him. He saw his little daughter, too, and of course Jean, with whom he again became intimate. His letters written this month to James Smith and William Nicol show him

* At this point Robert Ainslie left him for Edinburgh.

in a wretched state of mind—satiated with success, sick of Edinburgh and its *eclat*, worn out, probably, with the fatigues, and ashamed of the occasional excesses of his journey, intensely dissatisfied with the friends of Jean, if still in a manner enamoured of Jean herself, and gloomily pondering the uncertainties of the future—altogether in a fitting mood for committing suicide, or buying a copy of Milton to study the character of that great personage Satan! He chose, and it was safer surely, the latter alternative. Even Daddie Auld or Black Jock might have thought it better for Burns to purchase the devil's *simulacrum* than to go to himself!

Restless and unhappy, he did not remain long at this time in Mauchline; he disappeared as suddenly as he had arrived, going—some say to Edinburgh, others only to Glasgow—and re-appearing in a short time, having first sent home a lot of dresses of mode silk to his relatives. Mrs. Begg was sent to Ayr to assist in making them up for herself and her mother; and when she returned he had come back, and insisted on her putting her dress on that he might see how well she looked in it. For them at least he had no feelings but respect and affection, and how considerate as well as kind was this conduct on his part! It was either on this journey, or shortly afterwards, that he paid a flying visit to the West Highlands, and in passing he might see the relatives and the grave of Highland Mary. "Come like shadows, so depart," seems to have been his motto at this time. How he went to Inveraray we know not, but we find him there in huge wrath at being rejected from the castle by the Duke, and writing on the window the well-known epigram—

"Whoe'er he be that sojourns here,
I pity much his case,
Unless he come to wait upon
The Lord their God, his Grace.

There 's nacthing here but Highland pride,
And Highland scab and hunger:
If Providence has sent me here,
'Twas surely in an anger."

We are reminded here of Alexander Smith, who once in a letter to us contrasted very humorously two visits of his to the western metropolis of the Highlands. In the first he lodged in the "worst inn's worst room" for some eighteenpence, in a bed where he found himself never less alone than when alone; and in the second, after he had become famous, he was lodged like a prince in the grand mansion of the MacCallummore, and handed down the Duchess to dinner. Burns made only one visit to Inveraray. Thence he "recoiled into the wilderness," and reached Arrochar through a country whose "savage streams tumble down savage mountains, thinly overspread with savage flocks, which starvingly support savage inhabitants." On his way back he met with some "savage hospitality" to boot; and in riding, half seas over, a race with a Highlander who was wholly so, he and his famous mare, Jenny Geddes, came to the ground, and the bard was terribly bruised. In the too hospitable house at Lochlomond he is thought to have composed his lines on a "Highland Welcome." He tells his correspondent, in the same letter in which he records his misadventure, of a flirtation he was carrying on with a lady of good condition, but somewhat distant and cold to him when he approached the consummation of the matter. Of this lady little is known, except that nothing came of the affair, and that she was from Ayrshire. He returned in July to Mossgiel. While staying there he wrote an "Elegy" on the death of John MacLeod, Younger, of Raasay, with whose family Burns had become acquainted in Edinburgh, indited his famous autobiographical letter to Dr. Moore, and another "Elegy," on the death of Sir James Hunter Blair, an Ayrshire squire, and member of the banking house of Sir William Forbes. After he reached Edinburgh he inclosed this in a copy of verses which he wrote there to Miss Ferrier, afterwards Mrs. General Graham, a sister to Miss Ferrier—author of "Marriage," "The Inheritance," and "Destiny," three excellent Scotch novels—and aunt to the illustrious Professor Ferrier. Burns came to town on the 7th August; it was possibly on this transit that he had the grand reception at Covington Mains. He had need of it to maintain his spirits, for he was now again in a sad scrape. We said he had left Edinburgh outwardly unstained, but there was a girl in that city named Jenny Clow who bore him a child,* and Chambers record that a writ of *In meditatione fugæ*, bearing date August 15, was issued against him, on which he had defiantly written some indecorous old verses. This serves to explain still more fully the gloomy state of his mind at Mossgiel, which he vainly sought to drown in the dissipation of the Highlands. If Burns sinned, he suffered; he was what old divines used to call a "sensible sinner." If his iniquities were much greater than those of other men, his remorse was infinitely deeper and stronger while it endured. If he did not sip at the cup of corruption, but drank of it deep and large, deeper and larger still were his draughts of the cup of misery and shame—yea, he wrung out the bitter dregs withal!

Burns had other business to do in Edinburgh, to transact with Creech, and to prepare for a new tour. Richmond had taken in another lodger, and Burns did not reside with him at this time, but with Willie Nicol, for whom he cherished a warm regard. Nicol was a coarse, irascible savage, with learning, wit, and talent, but without genius or taste; warm-hearted and friendly to his friends, furious and implacable to his foes; one of those men over whose graves friends feel thankful that they have escaped the

* See Appendix, No. III.

gallows! His conduct to Adam, the gentle and learned Rector of the High School—well known for his writings on Roman Antiquities, &c., better known, perhaps, for his exclamation, as he lay dying, "It is getting dark; you may go home, boys"—was distinguished by a rancorous and persevering cruelty. To Burns he was an uncongenial, troublesome, and dangerous associate; yet some coarse element in the poet's nature attracted him to Nicol, and he chose him as his companion in his northern tour.

We quote, as formerly, the account by Burns himself, down to September 16, when he again arrived in Edinburgh, appending, as before, a few *addenda*:—

"(*Saturday*), 25*th August*, 1787.—I leave Edinburgh for a northern tour, in company with my good friend, Mr. Nicol, whose originality of humour promises me much entertainment. Linlithgow—a fertile improved country—West Lothian. The more elegance and luxury among the farmers, I always observe, in equal proportion, the rudeness and stupidity of the peasantry. This remark I have made all over the Lothians, Merse, Roxburgh, &c. For this, among other reasons, I think that a man of romantic taste, a 'Man of Feeling,' will be better pleased with the poverty, but intelligent minds of the peasantry in Ayrshire (peasantry they are all below the Justice of Peace), than the opulence of a club of Merse farmers, when at the same time he considers the Vandalism of their plough-folks, &c. I carry this idea so far, that an uninclosed, half-improven country is to me actually more agreeable, and gives me more pleasure as a prospect, than a country cultivated like a garden. Soil about Linlithgow light and thin. The town carries the appearance of rude, decayed grandeur—charmingly rural, retired situation. The old royal palace a tolerably fine, but melancholy ruin, sweetly situated on a small elevation, by the brink of a loch. Shown the room where the beautiful injured Mary Queen of Scots was born—a pretty good old Gothic church. The infamous stool of repentance standing, in the old Romish way, on a lofty situation.

"What a poor pimping business is a Presbyterian place of worship; dirty, narrow, and squalid; stuck in a corner of old popish grandeur such as Linlithgow, and much more Melrose! Ceremony and show, if judiciously thrown in, absolutely necessary for the bulk of mankind, both in religious and civil matters. Dine. Go to my friend Smith's at Avon printfield; find nobody but Mrs. Miller, an agreeable, sensible, modest, good body, as useful, but not so ornamental, as Fielding's Miss Western—not rigidly polite *à la Francais*, but easy, hospitable, and housewifely.

"An old lady from Paisley, a Mrs. Lawson, whom I promise to call for in Paisley; like old Lady W[auchope], and still more like Mrs. C——, her conversation is pregnant with strong sense and just remark, but, like them, a certain air of self-importance, and a *duresse* in the eye, seem to indicate, as the Ayrshire wife observed of her cow, that "she had a mind o' her ain.'

"Pleasant view of Dunfermline, and the rest of the fertile coast of Fife, as we go down to that dirty, ugly place, Borrowstounness: see a horse-race, and call on a friend of Mr. Nicol's, a Bailie Cowan, of whom I know too little to attempt his portrait. Come through the rich carse of Falkirk to pass the night. Falkirk nothing remarkable, except the tomb of Sir John the Graham, over which, in the succession of time, four [three] stones have been placed.

"*Sunday, August* 26.—Camelon, the ancient metropolis of the Picts, now a small village in the neighbourhood of Falkirk. Cross the Grand Canal to Carron.*

"Pass Dunipace, a place laid out with fine taste; a charming amphitheatre bounded by Denny village, and pleasant seats down the way to Dunipace. The Carron, running down the bosom of the whole, makes it one of the most charming little prospects I have seen.

"Dine at Auchinbowie: Mr. Monro, an excellent worthy old man; Miss Monro, an amiable, sensible, sweet young woman, much resembling Mrs. Grierson. Come to Bannockburn. Shown the old house where James III. finished so tragically his unfortunate life. The field of Bannockburn: the hole where glorious Bruce set his standard. Here no Scot can pass uninterested. I fancy to myself that I see my gallant, heroic countrymen, coming o'er the hill and down upon the plunderers of their country, the murderers of their fathers; noble revenge and just hate glowing in every vein, striding more and more eagerly as they approach the oppressive, insulting, bloodthirsty foe! I see them meet in gloriously-triumphant congratulation on the victorious field, exulting in their heroic royal leader, and rescued liberty and independence! Come to Stirling.

"*Monday.*—Go to Harvieston. Go to see Caudron Linn, and Rumbling Brig, and Deil's Mill. Return in the evening.

"Supper—Messrs. Doig, the schoolmaster; Bell; and Captain Forrester of the castle. Doig, a queerish figure, and something of a pedant; Bell, a joyous fellow, who sings a good song; Forrester, a merry, swearing kind of man, with a dash of the sodger.

"*Tuesday morning.*—Breakfast with Captain Forrester; Ochil Hills; Devon River;† Forth and Teith; Allan

* We give in the Poems some trifling verses, written by Burns on his journey to Stirling, Falkirk, and Carron. Lockhart tells us a story, that when Nicol, along with Burns, was approaching Carron Iron-works (he says riding, but they were undoubtedly in a post-chaise), he was constantly crying out, "Look, Burns! Good Heavens! Look, look! What a glorious sight!" "Sir," said Burns, "I would not look at your bidding, if it were the mouth of hell!"

† Burns diverged at Stirling to the valley of the Devon, leaving Nicol behind him for a day. He went there to visit Mrs. Chalmers,

River; Strathallan, a fine country, but little improved; Cross Earn to Crieff; Dine and go to Aberuchil; cold reception at Aberuchil; a most romantically pleasant ride up Earn, by Auchtertyre and Comrie, to Aberuchil; Sup at Crieff.*

"*Wednesday morning.*—Leave Crieff; Glen Almond; Almond River; Ossian's grave; Loch Fruoch; Glenquaich; Landlord and landlady remarkable characters;

the mother of Margaret Chalmers (afterwards Mrs. Lewis Hay), an Edinburgh acquaintance and special friend of Burns, who had met her at Dr. Blacklock's—to whom she commended herself by her fine voice. Margaret was now in Edinburgh; but her mother was at Harvieston, on a visit to Mrs. Hamilton, the stepmother of Gavin Hamilton, Burns' Ayrshire friend. She was residing with Mr. Tait of Harvieston (the Archbishop of Canterbury is sprung from this family) presiding over his establishment till his daughter grew up. Her daughter, Charlotte Hamilton, was here also. Mr. Tait was a widower, and his deceased wife had been sister to Mrs. Chalmers and Mrs. Hamilton. Miss Mackenzie, an older sister of Margaret Chalmers, was here, too, with her mother. It was altogether an interesting group; and if Burns regretted the absence of his musical friend, Margaret Chalmers, it was more than made up by the presence of Charlotte Hamilton. This

"Loveliest flower on the banks of the Devon"

had been once

"A sweet bud on the braes of the Ayr."

She was the younger sister of Gavin Hamilton; she is described by the poet (see his CORRESPONDENCE) in more than usually ardent terms, and not merely his first rapturous expressions, but his allusions to her in his subsequent writings, and notably the fact that a little before his death he wrote a song, his last song, about her, seem to prove that he cherished her as an ideal on his mind ever afterwards, and that even in that awful hour—

"Her dear idea gave relief and solace to his breast."

He accompanied her and her friends to the well-known Caldron Linn, on the Devon. He describes it in very general, and by no means enthusiastic terms; yet, he says he spent at it one of the happiest days he ever spent in his life. In fact, he thought more of her than the scenery, was fairly caught, and but for the unsettled state of his prospects, and perhaps her youth, might have proposed. At all events he left Harvieston for Stirling on the evening of that eventful day with a full, perhaps a sad and sore heart. We will find him in her company afterwards; but it was love at first sight, and like many of Burns' loves, was doomed to disappointment. The editor of the excellent Kilmarnock edition says it was Margaret Chalmers on whom Burns wrote his last song; but it is quite enough to say in reply that, while Margaret Chalmers was not that delightful day with the poet on the Devon, Charlotte Hamilton was. Besides, he calls her "fairest maid;" but Margaret Chalmers had no chance with Charlotte for beauty. Though never professed lovers, they became intimate friends; but that some estrangement occurred between them is evident from an expression in the song—

"Prithee leave that frown aside,
And smile as thou wert wont to do"—

and also from the fact that Miss Hamilton burnt all the letters which had passed between her and Burns, and many of Margaret Chalmers' too. More of her and her husband, Adair, in a little. Burns, everybody knows, wrote on her the beautiful song—

"How pleasant the banks of the clear winding Devon," &c.

At Stirling Burns, angry at the ruinous state of the old hall of the Scottish Parliament under the Stuarts, wrote some verses reflecting on the House of Hanover, which gave great offence and provoked some indignant comments—

Taymouth, described in rhyme;† meet the Hon. Charles Townshend.

"*Thursday.*—Come down Tay to Dunkeld; Glenlyon House; Lyon River; Druid's Temple; three circles of stones, the outermost sunk, the second has thirteen stones remaining, the innermost has eight, two large detached ones like a gate, to the south-east; say prayers in it; pass Taybridge; Aberfeldy, described in rhyme; Castle Menzies; Inver; Dr. Stewart. Sup.

"*Friday.*—Walk with Mrs. Stewart and Beard to

"Here Stuarts once in triumph reigned,
And laws for Scotland's weal ordained;
But now unroofed their palace stands,
Their sceptre's swayed by other hands.
The injured Stuart line is gone,
A race outlandish fill their throne—
An idiot race, to honour lost,
Who know them best despise them most."

He, himself, afterwards broke the pane.

* We, as belonging to Upper Strathearn, notice here with natural interest—Burns, after dining at Crieff and riding up the lovely valley of the Earn, approaching the dark noble ridge of mountains called the Aberuchill Hills, at the base of which stands the Castle of Aberuchill, and which seem abruptly to stop the valley and command the beauty of it to soar up into grandeur. That Burns admired this scene is certain, for he calls it a "delightfully pleasant ride." But he had, it seems, a cold reception at Aberuchill, by whom or for what cause it were vain now to inquire (but, see afterwards). He mentions Comrie. That beautiful village must have been then very different from what it is now. Its fine parish church, with its far-seen spire, was not erected. The monument to Lord Melville (old Hal Dundas), at present so romantic a feature, which looks like a bright finger relieved against the black hills beyond, was not built till 1811. And not a single shock of earthquake had as yet frightened the people from their propriety. But behind the village the Deil's Cauldron was then thundering (pity the author of the "Address to the Deil" had not visited it) above; the grey crag, where the monument came to be erected, was rising like a scalp over the woodland which begirds the cataract; and around were the noble semi-circle of volcanic mountains, with the giant Benvoirlich just peering into view, and the glen up which Kilmeny had gone, in far back years, to meet the visions of celestial day, expanding westward to Loch Earn. (See Hogg's "Queen's Wake.") Burns returned to sup in Crieff. We doubt if, in 1787, there was a good inn in Comrie; and perhaps had he entered the one there was, he might, like Nicol Jarvie, have found some tremendous Highlandman, equipped with wrath and whisky, who would have quarrelled with our poet, fought with him, perhaps murdered him, and then we would have wanted "Tam o' Shanter" and the sweetest songs in the world!

† Burns' verses on "Taymouth" and the "Fall of Fyers" are poor, stiff, stilted affairs, very different from his "Birks of Aberfeldy," "Loch Turrit," and the "Petition of Bruar Water." Ossian's grave and the glorious scenery of the Sma' Glen, Loch Fruoch or Freuchie, and Glenquaich, called forth no poetical response from him. At Taymouth he met with the Hon. Charles Townshend. This could not be the Townshend so gorgeously described by Burke:—"Before this splendid orb (Lord Chatham) was entirely set, and while the western horizon was in a blaze with its descending glory, in the opposite quarter of the Heavens arose another luminary, and for his hour became Lord of the Ascendant." This great man died in 1767, and Burke panegyrized him in 1774. It must have been some other gentleman of the same name, and we are not deep enough in the family history of the Townshends to determine who it was. It could not, of course, have been Tom Townshend, Charles' brother, of whom, in connection with Burke, Goldsmith thus wrote in his "Retaliation"—

"Though fraught with all learning, yet straining his throat
To persuade Tommy Townshend to lend him a vote."

Birnam top; fine prospect down Tay; Craigiebarns Hills; hermitage on the Bran Water, with a picture of Ossian; breakfast with Dr. Stewart; Neil Gow plays; a short, stout-built, honest Highland figure, with his grayish hair shed on his honest social brow, an interesting face, marking strong sense, kind open-heartedness, mixed with unmistrusting simplicity; visit his house; Marget Gow.

"Ride up Tummel River to Blair; Fascally, a beautiful romantic nest; wild grandeur of the Pass of Killiecrankie; visit the gallant Lord Dundee's stone.

"Blair; sup with the Duchess; easy and happy from the manners of the family; confirmed in my good opinion of my friend Walker.*

"*Saturday* (*Sept.* 1).—Visit the scenes round Blair—fine, but spoiled with bad taste; Tilt and Garry rivers; Falls on the Tilt; heather seat; ride in company with Sir William Murray and Mr. Walker to Loch Tummel; meanderings of the Rannoch, which runs through quondam Struan Robertson's estate from Loch Rannoch to Loch Tummel; dine at Blair. Company:—General Murray; Captain Murray, an honest tar; Sir William Murray, an honest, worthy man, but tormented with the hypochondria; Mrs. Graham, *belle et aimable;* Miss Cathcart; Mrs. Murray, a painter; Mrs. King; Duchess and fine family, the Marquis, Lords James, Edward, and Robert; Ladies Charlotte, Emilia, and children dance; sup; Mr. Graham of Fintry.†

"Come up the Garry; Falls of Bruar; Dalnacardoch; Dalwhinnie; dine; snow on the hills seventeen feet deep; no corn from Loch-garry to Dalwhinnie; cross the Spey, and come down the stream to Pitnain; straths rich; *les environs* picturesque; Craigow Hill; Ruthven of Badenoch; barracks; wild and magnificent; Rothiemurchie on the other side, and Glenmore; Grant of Rothiemurchie's poetry; told me by the Duke of Gordon; Strathspey, rich and romantic; breakfast at Aviemore, a wild spot; dine

* Burns, at Blair, again met with Josiah Walker, who was now acting as tutor in the Duke of Athole's family. We copy Walker's account of Burns at the Tilt, by far the best bit contributed by him to his Recollections of the Poet. "On reaching Blair, he sent me notice of his arrival (as I had been previously acquainted with him), and I hastened to meet him at the inn. The Duke, to whom he brought a letter of introduction, was from home: but the Duchess, being informed of his arrival, gave him an invitation to sup and sleep at Athole House. He accepted the invitation; but as the hour of supper was at some distance, begged I would, in the interval, be his guide through the grounds. It was already growing dark; yet the softened though faint and uncertain view of their beauties, which the moonlight afforded us, seemed exactly suited to the state of his feeling at the time. I had often like others, experienced the pleasures which arise from the sublime or elegant landscape, but I never saw those feelings so intense as in Burns. When we reached a rustic hut on the river Tilt, where it is overhung by a woody precipice, from which there is a noble waterfall, he threw himself on the heathy seat, and gave himself up to a tender, abstracted, and voluptuous enthusiasm of imagination. I cannot help thinking it might have been here that he conceived the idea of the following lines, which he afterwards introduced into his poem on Bruar Water, when only fancying such a combination of objects as were now present to his eye:—

'Or by the reaper's nightly beam,
Mild, chequering through the trees,
Rave to my darkly-dashing stream,
Hoarse-swelling on the breeze.'

It was with much difficulty I prevailed on him to quit this spot, and to be introduced in proper time to supper.

"My curiosity was great to see how he would conduct himself in company so different from what he had been accustomed to. His manner was unembarrassed, plain, and firm. He appeared to have complete reliance on his own native good sense for directing his behaviour. He seemed at once to perceive and to appreciate what was due to the company and to himself, and never to forget a proper respect for the separate species of dignity belonging to each. He did not arrogate conversation, but, when led into it, he spoke with ease, propriety, and manliness. He tried to exert his abilities, because he knew it was ability alone gave him a title to be there. The Duke's fine young family attracted much of his admiration; he drank their healths as 'honest men and bonnie lassies,' an idea which was much applauded by the company, and with which he has very felicitously closed his poem.

"Next day I took a ride with him through some of the most romantic parts of that neighbourhood, and was highly gratified by his conversation. As a specimen of his happiness of conception and strength of expression, I will mention a remark which he made on his fellow-traveller, who was walking at the time a few paces before us. He was a man of a robust but clumsy person; and while Burns was expressing to me the value he entertained for him, on account of his vigorous talents, although they were clouded at times by coarseness of manners; 'in short,' he added, 'his mind is like his body—he has a confounded strong in-kneed sort of a soul.'

"Much attention was paid to Burns both before and after the Duke's return, of which he was perfectly sensible, without being vain; and at his departure I recommended to him, as the most appropriate return he could make, to write some descriptive verses on any of the scenes with which he had been so much delighted. After leaving Blair, he, by the Duke's advice, visited the Falls of Bruar, and in a few days I received a letter from Inverness, with the verses enclosed." The family wished much that Burns should have stopt a little longer, and even tried to bribe the driver to pull off a shoe from the horse; but he was "incorruptible." It is a pity he did not halt, as Henry Dundas (Lord Melville to be) was expected; and had that king of Scotland's politics met the king of Scotland's poetry, we know not what he might have done for Burns. He was not a man to start at trifles, and, with many faults, was of a generous disposition. A very acute man, he would have seen Burns at a glance, his uses and possibilities as well as powers. We suspect William Pitt afterwards cooled whatever intentions Dundas might have had to Burns, as he pushed the bottle to Melville and said, "Very clever man Burns, true poet; his poetry, like Shakspeare's, comes sweetly from nature. Pity, &c., &c." Mr. Graham of Fintry, however, was at Blair, and became afterwards of partial service to our poet in his Excise schemes.

† Burns thought the day he spent at Blair Athole one of the happiest of his life. He was greatly struck with the children, whom he calls a "little angel band;" also, with two ladies, Mrs. Graham and Miss Cathcart. They were daughters of Lord Cathcart, and sisters to the Duchess of Athole. Mrs. Graham was married to Thomas Graham of Balgowan, afterwards the Lord Lynedoch of Barossa celebrity. She died in the bloom of beauty, five years after Burns saw her, and sorrow at this made her husband a soldier. Gainsborough had painted her as only he was able to do; but after her death the bereaved husband could not bear to look at the portrait, and sent it away to a picture-framer in London, to lie there out of his sight, as her beautiful self had been buried. It was discovered by Mr. Graham of Balgowan, and restored to light afterwards. Miss Cathcart too, an amiable and lovely creature, died early, and so did the Duchess of Athole—

"Sing mournfully, Oh! mournfully,
The solitude of Binnorie."—*Wordsworth.*

at Sir James Grant's; Lady Grant, a sweet, pleasant body; come through mist and darkness to Dulsie, to lie [sleep].

"*Tuesday.*—Findhorn river; rocky banks; come on to Castle Cawdor, where Macbeth murdered King Duncan; saw the bed in which King Duncan was stabbed; dine at Kilravock; Mrs. Rose, sen., a true chieftain's wife; Fort-George; Inverness.

"*Wednesday.*—Loch Ness; Braes of Ness; General's Hut; Fall of Fyers; Urquhart Castle and Strath.

"*Thursday.*—Come over Culloden Muir—reflections on the field of battle; breakfast at Kilravock; old Mrs. Rose, sterling sense, warm heart, strong passions, and honest pride, all in an uncommon degree; Mrs. Rose, jun., a little milder than the mother; this, perhaps, owing to her being younger;* Mr. Grant, minister at Calder, resembles Mr. Scott at Inverleithen. Mrs. Rose and Mrs. Grant accompany us to Kildrummie; two young ladies—Miss Rose, who sang two Gaelic songs, beautiful and lovely—Miss Sophia Brodie, most agreeable and amiable—both of them gentle, mild—the sweetest creatures on earth, and happiness be with them! †

"Dine at Nairn; fall in with a pleasant enough gentleman, Dr. Stewart, who had been long abroad with his father in the forty-five; and Mr. Falconer, a spare, irascible, warm-hearted Norland, and a nonjuror; Brodie House to lie.

"*Friday* (*Sept.* 7).—Forres; famous stone at Forres. Mr. Brodie tells me that the muir where Shakspeare lays Macbeth's witch-meeting is still haunted, that the country folks wont pass it by night.

. . . . . .

"Venerable ruins of Elgin Abbey (Cathedral), a grander effect at first glance than Melrose, but not near so beautiful. Cross Spey to Fochabers; fine palace (Gordon Castle, the seat of the Duke of Gordon), worthy of the generous proprietor; dine. Company:—Duke and Duchess, Ladies Charlotte and Magdeline,‡ Colonel Abercrombie and Lady, Mr. Gordon, and Mr. ——, a clergyman, a venerable aged figure; the Duke makes me happier than ever great man did; noble, princely, yet mild, condescending, and affable; gay and kind; the Duchess witty and sensible—God bless them!

"Come to Cullen to lie; hitherto the country is sadly poor and unimproven.

"Come to Aberdeen; meet with Mr. Chalmers, printer, a facetious fellow; Mr. Ross, a fine fellow, like Professor Tytler; Mr. Marshall, one of the *poetæ minores;* Mr. Sheriffs, author of 'Jamie and Bess,' a little decrepit body, with some abilities; Bishop Skinner,§ a nonjuror, son of the author of 'Tullochgorum;' a man whose mild, venerable manner is the most marked of any in so young a man. Professor Gordon, a good-natured, jolly-looking professor; Aberdeen a lazy town.

"Near Stonehive [Stonehaven]," he says, "the coast a good deal romantic. Meet my relations. Robert Burns, writer in Stonehive, one of those who love fun, a gill, and a punning joke, and have not a bad heart—his wife a sweet, hospitable body, without any affectation of what is called town-breeding.

"*Tuesday.*—Breakfast with Mr. Burns; lie at Lawrence-kirk; album; library; Mrs. ——, a jolly, frank, sensible, love-inspiring widow; Howe of the Mearns, a rich, cultivated, but still uninclosed country.‖

"*Wednesday.*—Cross North Esk river and a rich country to Craigow.

"Breakfast (Sept. 13) at Muthie, and sail along that wild, rocky coast, and see the famous caverns, particularly the Gairiepot; land and dine at Arbroath; stately ruin of Arbroath Abbey; come to Dundee through a fertile country; Dundee a low-lying but pleasant town;¶ old steeple; Tay

* Relations of "Man of Feeling."

† During all this journey Nicol was an awful incubus on Burns. He hurried him away from "Athole's honest men and bonnie lassies," from Kilravock and Kildrummie, and then again from Gordon Castle. The latter story stamps Nicol as a fellow totally unworthy of the companionship of Burns. Angry that Burns went to Gordon Castle without him, that Burns waited there a good while without him, and that Burns condescended to come and ask him to join him at the castle, the infuriated pedagogue at last led off his victim, otherwise he would have gone away without him, and pity he had not! It is said that the Duchess of Gordon had planned a meeting of Henry Addington (Lord Sidmouth) with Burns and Beattie, which might have been of material service to our poet. Addington was an admirer of Burns' genius, and is said to have forwarded to him certain lines, which are given by Allan Cunningham, but of the authenticity of which we have our doubts. Nor are we quite certain of the stories we have in *Chambers' Journal* about Nicol's talk with Burns at Banff, else we might have reproduced them. They have a decidedly apocryphal look.

‡ Lady Charlotte, mother of the Duke of Richmond. Magdeline, married to Sir Robert Sinclair of Murkle.

§ At Aberdeen Burns met with Bishop Skinner, son of the venerable Rev. John Skinner of Linshart, near Peterhead. Burns had passed his house unwittingly, and keenly regretted never having seen him, although he afterwards corresponded with that singularly patriarchal and gifted person, whose "Ewie with the Crooked Horn," "John of Badenyon," and "Tullochgorum," have given him such a high position among Scottish song writers; and who in purity and piety, although he was only a pastor, approached the ideal of a primitive bishop.

‖ Chambers regrets that Burns does not tell us more of his visit to his "Calf-country," the Mearns. We have been told that his cousin, James Burness, the writer in Montrose, father of Sir Alexander Burness, went out with his son to meet him at Marykirk and accompany him to Montrose, when Robert Burns said to him—"I have been at our paternal farm in the Mearns, and showed our cousin some little things I had written by the way, which I mean to publish," but the former screekit himself up, struck his stick on the floor, and said, "Fie, fie, man, are ye gaen to affront your respectable freends by printing sic godless nonsense? na, na, gie me them, and I'll put them in the fire." To this it is said the poet often alluded while in Montrose and afterwards, and never altogether forgave his old relative. This anecdote was communicated to our informant by one of the Burness family, living recently in Montrose.

¶ Dundee he calls "a low-lying but pleasant town." We are able, through the kindness of a worthy and intelligent widow lady residing in Dundee, Mrs. Home Scott, to supply some new information in reference to the night Burns spent in Bonnie Dundee. Mr. Jobson of the Commercial Bank was at this time one of the principal, if not the

Frith; Broughty Castle, a finely-situated ruin, jutting into the Tay.

"*Friday.*—Breakfast with the Miss Scotts; Miss Bess Scott like Mrs. Greenfield; my bardship almost in love with her; come through the rich harvests and fine hedgerows of the Carse of Gowrie, along the romantic margin of the Grampian Hills to Perth—fine, fruitful, hilly, woody country round Perth.

"*Saturday Morning.*—Leave Perth; come up Strathearn to Endermay; fine, fruitful, cultivated Strath; the scene of 'Bessie Bell and Mary Gray' near Perth; fine scenery on the banks of the May; Mrs. Belshes, gawcie, frank, affable, fond of rural sports, hunting, &c.; lie at Kinross; reflections in a fit of the colic.

"*Sunday* (*Sept.* 16).—Pass through a cold, barren country to Queensferry; dine; cross the ferry, and on to Edinburgh."

There are various other rumours floating in Dundee about Burns. One, although it cannot be exactly credited, is so curious that we are tempted to relate it. A venerable and singularly worthy old lady, ninety-six years of age, but in wonderful preservation, insists on it that she remembers Burns. She says she was then a little girl or "gilpie," doing "chares" in the house of a farmer, residing in a place, near Dundee, called Clepington; that Burns came to her master's house and stopt all night; and that she "washed his sark." Of this she is perfectly assured, although in 1787, being only four years of age, she could hardly have been competent to such a feat; and as a gentleman humorously remarked, had been more likely to have fallen into the washing tub and been drowned. Still it is the one bit of romance in all her history, and it were cruel to disturb her in her long life-dream. *

From Dundee he would, after sleeping probably in the Vault Inn and breakfasting with the Scotts, ride to Perth. He makes a blunder in his Journal: he says that he came along the romantic margin of the Grampian hills to Perth; but the hills to the north of the Carse of Gowrie are not the Grampians, but only a spur from the Sidlaws. From Perth he went to Invermay, or "Endermay," as he calls it, where lived the Belshes family, to whom he had an introduction, and which was the scene of the old song, "The Birks of Invermay." We remember the late amiable and truly gifted Jamieson, United Presbyterian minister of Methven, telling us of a Perthshire gentleman in Paris who was sitting in his hotel, sad and home-sick, when he suddenly heard two children singing on the street, "The Birks of Invermay." It saddened him more at first; but the sadness brought tears, which carried away the sorrow. Mr. Jamieson did not tell, probably did not know, who the children were, or how they came there, or their future fate. Burns says, "The scene of Bessie Bell and Mary Gray, near Perth," but does not say that he visited the traditionary spot, which lies on the opposite side of the valley from Invermay. He could hardly have seen both places, dined with the Belshes, and reached Kinross, all in one day. He had a fit of colic at Kinross, and some serious reflections therewith—perhaps bearing more on the far past than on this recent journey, which seems to have been one of unmingled and innocent gratification. He arrived at Edinburgh on the 16th of September.

Returned to the metropolis, Burns threw himself with great enthusiasm into Johnston's projected "Museum of

principal, citizens in Dundee. He was in good circumstances, and possessed of much and varied intelligence. Before, but still more after his marriage, his house was open to all guests of distinction who visited the town—actors, painters, and other celebrities. This gentleman entertained Burns. It is doubtful if he slept in his house, as Jobson was then a bachelor, and might not have proper accommodation for him and for the horse on which he had likely rode from Arbroath. (He had come part of the road from Montrose by sea, visiting the caverns at Auchmithie, and had landed at Arbroath.) But he supped with him. Suppers at that time took place at eight in the evening, and likely, according to the manner of the times, the wee short hours would be reached before the party separated. Probably some of the leading citizens might be invited to meet the lion. Mr. Jobson used to speak to his daughter (Mrs. H. Scott, and to a son of his, who ultimately settled in England and died there) of Burns' great modesty of manner, the extraordinary charm and power of his conversation, and the almost preternatural lustre of his eyes. Burns, in his brief notes, says, "Breakfast with the Miss Scotts; Miss Bess Scott like Mrs. Greenfield; my bardship almost in love with her." These Miss Scotts were two unmarried but young ladies residing in Dundee. Their father had been parish minister in Auchterhouse, near Dundee, but was dead. They had a house together, and were remarkable for their accomplishments and general superiority of mind and manners. Miss Scott was more a blue than a beauty; Bess was more of the beauty. Miss Scott had many offers of marriage from gentlemen of high standing, both citizens and strangers, but declined them all, and lived long single and very highly respected. Bess was, at the time when Burns came to Dundee, engaged to Mr. Jobson, and it was very natural in him to carry the poet in the morning to breakfast with the ladies, and see his sweetheart. Mr. Jobson married Bess Scott shortly after, and our kind and accomplished informant, Mrs. H. Scott, is her daughter, a lady full of all sorts of information about the *élite* of the society of her younger days—the Siddonses, Murrays, Kembles, and others, including Robert Ainslie, the friend of Burns. Who the Mrs. Greenfield mentioned here by Burns as very like the younger Miss Scott was, we are not exactly sure, unless she were the wife of the Mr. Greenfield whom we spoke of before as having to abscond from Edinburgh.

* This allusion to the Clepington led to the supposition that as a Mr. Jobson once possessed that estate and house, it was probable that he was the same with Miss H. Scott's friend, and that hence came the floating tradition of Burns being there. This idea was suggested to us by W. Neish, Esq., a Forfarshire proprietor (of Tannadice) of great intelligence, who has taken a special interest in this edition, and communicated to us full copies of Burns' letters to his brother William (see GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE). We found, however, on inquiry, that it was a different Mr. Jobson who in the year 1805, eighteen years after Burns' visit to Dundee, became proprietor of the Clepington—one Mr. David (known by the sobriquet of Bonnie Dauvid, from his fat, fair, and florid looks).

There is a floating rumour that Burns slept all the night he was in Dundee in a tavern called the Vault or "Vowt," then and long afterwards the principal inn of Dundee; but after inquiries, pursued with the most sedulous diligence by our friend, Mr. William Smith (of Newport) nothing very distinct or definite could be discovered—nothing but the fact that this was the constant tradition of the house, and that a room called Burns' room used to be pointed out, which no longer exists.

Scottish Song," got into a stream of correspondence with old Skinner of "Tullochgorum" fame, and with still greater ardour wrote letters and sent songs to his Harvieston friends (Margaret Chalmers having now joined the pleasant party there), and no doubt inclosing his heart in his epistles. He had wished to see Mr. Miller's farms in August; but it was now too late for this, and he determined to spend a portion of the remaining part of autumn in the north. He went in company with Dr. John M'Kittrick Adair, to whom he had been introduced by his Ayrshire friends, a physician afterwards settled in Harrogate. The travellers went by Linlithgow, Carron, and Stirling, to Harvieston. Adair says in August; but this is evidently a mistake. It must have been much later in the autumn. At Stirling they met Nicol, and had one joyous night with him. Burns, whenever he was called to sing, used to repeat a piece of poetry instead. They went the next day to Mrs. Hamilton's; Adair remarking rather needlessly that Burns, who had visited the place last summer, was acquainted with the younger people before. If Burns had any designs on Charlotte, he must, to use the vulgar expression, have put into Adair's hands a stick to break his own head; for he introduced him to her, and he became speedily her declared admirer, and soon after her accepted lover. They found the family engaged in a great washing, and in *deshabille*, but were graciously received; and after the gentlemen had retired to rest, Mrs. Hamilton, who slept in a room divided from theirs by a thin partition, overheard them discoursing for a long time ere they slept on the charms of Charlotte. Detained at Harvieston by heavy storms and floods, after the weather cleared they spent the time in very pleasant excursions. They revisited the Cauldron Linn and Rumbling Bridge, the ladies wondering at Burns' indifference to the scenery; he, in fact, being more, as upon a former occasion, engrossed in admiring them. Had he gone alone, he might have been inspired to write something worthy of those delightful spots. Dr. Adair is quite wrong in saying that Burns had no taste for the picturesque. But he did not like to be forced to admire, far less to be forced to versify his admiration. And to him, and probably to Adair, too, metal more attractive was near. He visited, also, Castle Campbell, or the "Castle of Gloom," and went afterwards to the two Ochtertyres. The laird of the one in Menteith was Mr. Ramsay, a man of some literature, fond of poetry, full of antiquarian lore, and afterwards a great friend of Sir Walter Scott. From hence he rode through Strathallan to the other Ochtertyre in Strathearn, then, as now, a plain house hung in the midst of a gallery of woods and gardens, with a placid lake below, and dark mountains rising behind and carrying off the view toward Loch Turrit—a loch lying dern and dreary under the frowning shadow of Ben-chonzie and Cair-na-chozie. It is supposed that Burns visited Sir William Murray, partly because he was a cousin and friend of Mr. Graham of Fintry, a Commissioner of Excise, whom the poet, beginning to look in that direction, was anxious again to meet, or at least to influence. Burns enjoyed Ochtertyre exceedingly. Sir William's lady, Lady Augusta, was a fine-looking woman in the prime of life. We have heard of a farmer on the estate, after paying his rent at the mansion, brought into the drawing-room to get a glass of wine, and to see, as a great treat, Lady Augusta, the celebrated beauty, newly married at the time. He was asked afterwards what he thought of her, and his answer was, "Toots, she 's naething to oor Kirsty," his own comely but homely spouse. Burns visited Loch Turrit, then a much grander solitude than now — unprofaned by *pic-nics*, and meet mountain-chamber for the steps of a solitary poet. The tradition (a small disenchanting one) of the House of Ochtertyre avers, that being a little exhausted by his walk, which is long, rough, and uphill, he went on returning to the butler's room, asked a glass of his best whisky, and wrote, "Blythe, blythe, and merry was she;" the genuine impulse to write which, however, was given by the sight of Miss Euphemia Murray of Lintrose, the "Flower of Strathmore," a young cousin of Sir William's, a fair-haired, lively girl of eighteen, afterwards married to Mr. Smythe of Methven Castle. He wrote his lines on scaring wild fowl at Loch Turrit, he tells us in the Glenriddell MS., during a solitary forenoon's walk from Ochtertyre House, and few verses are more characteristic of Burns. Indeed it may be called his Ode to Independence. The following lines, we venture to say, rushed on his mind in the shadow of the great silent mountains, and by the side of the lonely lake :—

> "Swiftly seek, on elanging wings,
> Other lakes and other springs;
> And the foe ye cannot brave,
> Scorn at least to be his slave."

There are many fine scenes and castles in the neighbourhood, such as Abercairney, Braco Castle (lying sublime and lonely by its hermit and homeless stream, and at the termination of that long ridge of sterility and silence, stretching between Ardoch and Comrie, called the "Langside"—a castle where dwelt a lady, after whom our old teacher, Sir Daniel Sandford, most brilliant of men, in his youth sighed, and sighed in vain; Ardoch being his headquarters during his hapless courtship), Lawers, Dunira, and Loch Earn; but we know not if Burns ever visited any of them. To the magnificent Drummond Castle (which we always think was in Scott's eye when he painted "Tullyveolan"), then occupied by Captain Drummond, afterwards Lord Perth, Burns was not invited, owing to his lines on the inn window at Stirling, formerly quoted.

Lord Perth was at this time a new convert from Jacobitism, having just got back the forfeited estates of his family again; and resented the verses the more on that account, which was rather paltry.* So Burns was not asked to visit the grand old house, throwing its tall, bold shadow westward toward the mountain, Turleum (which stands directly opposite, with all its fine wave of woods flowing to the very summit), with the beautiful lake on the north, the long stately avenue (see it described in "Waverley"), the gorgeous garden, and the green Ochils, terminating the southern prospect. Burns returned to the other Ochtertyre, after visiting, it is probable now, the scene of the tragedy of Bessie Bell and Mary Gray, which lay on the estate of Mr. Graham of Balgowan, whom he seems to have called on. In returning to Mr. Ramsay's, he must needs pass through Strathallan again.†

At his seat (which he could easily have reached on horseback from Greenloaning in a few hours) Burns remained two days, and Mr. Ramsay thought his conversation the best he had ever heard. He advised him to write a play like the "Gentle Shepherd," and also "Scottish Georgics." We doubt if either of these plans would have exactly suited Burns. He had not much plot-producing skill, although he had decided dramatic talent, so far as character was concerned. Nor could he have sustained descriptive enthusiasm, like Thomson, through a long poem. James Graham of the "Sabbath," who of all Scottish men in the nineteenth century, unless we except Wilson and Aird, loved Nature most and painted her best—at least, in those nooks and corners into which she retires, and to which he seemed to have followed her on his hands and knees—wrote "British Georgics" on this plan; but the book, in spite of some inimitable touches, totally failed, and is now nearly forgotten. Ramsay told Burns some traditions about Omeron Cameron (see CORRESPONDENCE), but Chambers wisely adds, "It was not for Burns, but for that noteless youth he met at Sir Adam Fergusson's, to accomplish such feats." Scott's "plays" are certainly not feats of genius; but of course if he refers to his novels, he is right. Ramsay more sensibly advised Burns to employ his imagination in the cause of truth and virtue, and in the main he followed his advice. On the whole, Ramsay did not resemble certain Edinburgh critics of the time, who reminded Burns of those spinsters in the country who "span their thread so fine that it was fit for neither weft nor woof."

At Clackmannan he met with a fine old gentlewoman of ninety, of whom Ramsay had forewarned him—Mrs. Bruce, calling herself of the blood of the Bruce, tall, dignified, dwelling in the ancient tower of Clackmannan, which overlooks the Forth, wearing a tartan scarf, and with the white rose of the Stuarts at her breast. She greatly impressed the imagination of the poet. When he asked her if she was sprung from the family of Robert Bruce, she replied that Robert Bruce was sprung from her family! She possessed the helmet and two-handed sword of the hero; and conferring the order of knighthood with it on Burns and Adair, she said she had a better right to confer it than *some folks*. She gave as her first toast after dinner, "Hooi uncos"—away strangers—a word used by shepherds to direct their dogs to drive away the sheep. She died in 1791, and the sword and helmet fell into the hands of Lord Elgin, and in his mansion of Broomhall are still preserved. Her connection, however, with the Bruce of Bannockburn is not, we believe, founded on fact.

Burns again (it is somewhat obscure in his Correspondence) visited Harvieston, and found that during his absence Dr. Adair had been using his time well by pushing his addresses to the beautiful Charlotte. They returned together to Edinburgh by Kinross and Queensferry. He visited Queen Mary's Isle at Loch Leven, also Dunfermline Abbey Church, and when he saw the two large flagstones which mark the grave of Robert Bruce, he knelt down and kissed the spot so sacred to memory. It is indeed holy ground! A clergyman, who preached there some years ago a public sermon, says "that he never felt so excited in his life as when remembering as he went on that the hallowed dust of the Bruce of Bannockburn was beneath his feet!" With characteristic volatility, however, Burns made Adair ascend the "cutty stool," and read him a ludicrous reproof (we once witnessed a similar scene between two clergymen, now dead, in the parish church of Inverleithen), founded on that he had received in Ayrshire from Daddie Auld, when he was one of seven (Chambers say five) who mounted the seat of shame together.

* Perhaps here, too, we find the cause of Burns' cold reception at Aberuchill. It belonged to the Drummonds.

† Here we may intercalate a piece of information about him we have received from a very respectable farmer—Mr. Finlayson of Dam of Quoight, by Greenloaning. This gentleman had an uncle, named Peter Finlayson, of Nether Meal Mill, near Greenloaning, who was with one of his customers in a small inn at Greenloaning, kept by a person named Towers. About the gloaming there dropt in a decent-looking countryman, with a strong south country accent. "On his taking a seat, he was presented with a glass of whisky, of which he took a moderate sip, and was returning it, when Finlayson said, 'Take it out, sir,' which Burns, for it was he, did; and then 'dunted' and called in his gill or noggin, and helped Finlayson and his friend to a return glass, which was only tasted by them, when Burns cried, 'Take it out as ye made me do,' to which they replied that they had some before. Nevertheless the party became very social. Burns' conversation was electrifying, and they sat very late. He told them who he was, but not till they were parting; and Peter Finlayson had often read his poems and songs in the *Edinburgh Courant*, a paper which was then in being, and where his poems occasionally did appear, although he had not read his book. He told them he had been at Ochtertyre; and they plied him with questions, which he dexterously parried till the very close of the evening." There is not very much in this story, but it is quite possible it fits in with this part of his history; and our informant assures us that it was narrated to him by his uncle forty years ago, and he was often urged to give it publicity.

Burns came back to Edinburgh on the 20th October, 1787, ill of a heavy cold he had contracted during his journey. Here our story parts from Dr. Adair, who returned to England, where he had a great many fashionable acquaintances, and became a popular physician in Harrogate. He was married to Charlotte Hamilton on the 16th November, 1789. His lovely wife, who seems to have been amiable, beautiful, and even gifted (Burns speaks of her "eye beaming with mind") fell into ill-health and died prematurely in 1806. She had, as we saw previously, burnt a number of Burns' and Miss Chalmers' letters. Dr. Adair volunteers a statement that his marriage with Charlotte Hamilton was happy, and we do not deny it. But it were to inquire too curiously if she, far away and hearing sad tales of her immortal friend, never heaved a sigh, and along with it felt a wish, that she had either—

"Never met or never parted"

from one who so long and fondly cherished her memory, and who was yet to see that beauty which he had admired at the Cauldron Linn glassed to his imagination in the waters of the Black River!

Burns, returned, began again to think of Dumfriesshire as a place to set up the staff of his rest; but ere he took any definite step he settled down in Edinburgh for some months; lived in the house of William Cruickshank, one of the High School teachers; and got his daughter Janet, a girl of twelve, to learn his songs by heart and play them on the piano, and rewarded her for doing so by writing some beautiful verses in her praise. Jenny Cruickshank, who became a fine girl, married a Mr. Henderson, a lawyer in Jedburgh; and a lady, her daughter-in-law, showed Chambers a china punch bowl which Burns, according to tradition, had broken in one of his *bouts* in her father's house in St. James' Square. (Ah! that measureless liar, Tradition! If we could believe it, we saw a year or two ago in the North of Scotland the very china saucer out of which Byron, in one of his boy rages, bit a piece, and there was the piece, too *). He threw himself into Johnson's plan of collecting songs with all his heart, and wrote many for him without money and without price. He got into a correspondence with James Hoy, librarian at Gordon Castle, a great enthusiast in Scottish song. He received a nice letter from his old master, Murdoch, now in London, and he wrote regularly to his two Harvieston flames; for he seemed, like Squire Thornhill in the "Vicar of Wakefield" with Olivia and Sophia Primrose, to have loved them both at once, although, Mrs. Johnstone thinks, he used the one as a stalking-horse to the other, and that his real affections were centred, like a true poet's, in the one he never had a chance of getting—Charlotte. Both were very superior women. Margaret Chalmers was short in stature; and although her portrait represents a highly-bred, refined, and dignified face, she had little beauty. But she had great spirit and ability, and whether loved or not, loving or not, she had undoubtedly much influence on Burns; a refining and softening influence, so long at least as she was with him. That this would have been permanent, had they come more closely together, we cannot say. Burns' manners were swayed perpetually by his passions, which were terribly strong, and by his impulses, which were exceedingly capricious. And it is so, we suspect, with most self-taught men of genius. About this time he visited Dalswinton, but did not instantly take a farm. In a letter to Miss Chalmers he talks about it and about it, and seems exceedingly uncertain as to his future prospects. But his Muse has not been idle. He has written a song on Charlotte, "The Banks of the Devon," and expects she will be highly pleased with it, and so no doubt she was. He had inscribed some trifling Jacobitish verses to William Tytler, the well-known defender of Mary Queen of Scots. And he had written a manly letter to Sir John Whitefoord, one of his Ayrshire patrons, vindicating his own character against the calumnies by which he had been assailed, especially in reference to the affair with poor Jean Armour, and to his presumed religious opinions. Besides the business of the farm, Burns had the annoyance of a reluctant and dilatory publisher, who was in no hurry to settle accounts with him for his very successful poems. Robert Chambers, himself a publisher, gives a statement of the Creech affair which is not very luminous, and we do not presume to understand the mystery better than he. He is right, however, when he says that Burns, instead of getting angry, should have put the affair into the hands of a legal deputy. But when he speaks of him repairing to Mossgiel, and writing fresh poems in the style of "Halloween" and "The Cottar's Saturday Night" he shows a misapprehension, as he did formerly, of the source of Burns' inspiration. "Halloweens" and "Cottar's Saturday Nights" do not come at the magic of mere money. Burns' heart and passions were his muses. His account was not yet to be settled for four months. In spite of Creech's delay Burns had now determined to leave Edinburgh, when another Will-o'-the-wisp shot across his path, and had well-nigh changed its course for ever and a day.

* We have heard since that evidence is soon to be produced by Dr. Thom of Stonehaven in proof of this tradition.

CHAPTER X.

BURNS AND CLARINDA—LAST DAYS IN EDINBURGH—MARRIAGE.

AGNES Craig, the heroine of this part of Burns' life, was no ordinary person, was of no common origin, and had no ordinary antecedents. She was the grand-niece of Colin MacLaurin, the celebrated mathematician; and he was brother of MacLaurin the divine, whose sermon, "Glorying in the Cross of Christ," has been called the most eloquent in the English language. She was the full cousin of Lord Craig, who wrote the pathetic paper on Michael Bruce in the *Mirror*, and the daughter of a respectable Glasgow physician. She was herself a lady of considerable accomplishments—wit, poetical feeling, warm temperament, and a style of beauty approaching the voluptuous. Her history had been singular. Her husband, James MacLehose, had gained her, it was rumoured, in a peculiar way. Falling in love with her, he determined to woo her in a fashion of his own. Ascertaining that on a certain day she was to travel to Glasgow from Edinburgh by stage coach, he took all the other seats in the coach, and had her to himself for forty miles; and played his game so effectually that by the time they reached Glasgow they were engaged. Such, at least, was the *on dit*, according to Mrs. Johnstone. Married in 1776, she being only seventeen, they were not happy, and MacLehose went out to the West Indies; and occupied in business and pleasure, took little thought of his wife and children. She came to reside in a kind of semi-widowhood, an unprotected female, in Edinburgh. Mrs. MacLehose had expressed to Miss Nimmo, an elderly lady, an acquaintance of Miss Chalmers, an ardent wish to meet with Burns; and at her house accordingly they met on the 11th of December, 1787, and probably he felt this when he wrote afterwards—

> "O May, thy morn was ne'er so sweet
> As the mirk night of December."

Their attachment, such as it was, seems to have begun on both sides, and at once. It is very difficult to settle its exact nature. It was neither love nor lust. It was in both strongly dashed with vanity, and from first to last there was need of danger signals and red lights. Yet they escaped, it would seem, as by a hair's breadth; or, as Mrs. Jameson says, "were saved so as by fire."

The Correspondence will tell the tale, and on this point, and this chiefly, is valuable. And although there are some very fine passages, the letters, as a whole, are as ridiculous rubbish as two intelligent persons, who were at the same time perfectly sane, ever addressed to each other Foolish, wicked James MacLehose never, we believe, in the first heyday of his courtship addressed such trumpery to Agnes Craig as "Sylvander"—*i.e.*, the greatest poet, and potentially one of the greatest men of his age—did here to "Clarinda." "Thank God," says Matthew Lewis, "even our passions pass away," however much, while they last, they may do to stunt intellectual stature, and to give the animal or the fiend the ascendency over the man. Sometimes indeed, on the other hand, passion, aye when it approaches the brink of insanity, gives a lurid grandeur to the character and an unnatural life to the intellect. So it did to Schiller and to Hazlitt. But of the infatuation of passion there was none in Burns' feeling for "Clarinda." Compare, in order to prove this, Hazlitt's "Liber Amoris" with "Sylvander's" letters. In the one you have the utmost misery, abandonment, and defiance of a desperate affection, and you hear in every page the eloquence of a broken, bursting heart; in the other you have every variety of falsetto and fudge—the happiness that of a drunken night's dream: the misery, on his side at any rate, more imaginative than real. Yet strange that when Burns passes from prose to poetry his right hand regains its cunning; and one or two of his songs—"My Nannie 's Awa" and "Ae fond kiss and then we sever"—if not sincere, show a power of simulating sincerity almost miraculous Scott finds the essence of a hundred love tales in the following stanza:—

> "Had we never loved so kindly,
> Had we never loved so blindly,
> Never met or never parted,
> We had ne'er been broken-hearted."

In reference to the letters given in the Correspondence, we may make a few observations, filling up gaps in the history they tell.

1. Clarinda lived in a house on the western pavement of Potterrow, a street now taken down in the march of improvement. We visited it in 1876. We are told that

Burns used to pace along the east pavement and look up to the window, where, in what was called the General's Entry (from General Monk), Clarinda lived. We could not gaze without deep interest on the spot where the brawny poet, still in the pride of his popularity, clad in buckskins, with his riding whip in his hand, stalked along and turned up his glowing looks to his cynosure, if haply he might catch a glance from her eye or a smile from her lips; and entering in we could not look without emotion at the little old-fashioned room, where, as with Mary Campbell, though in less romantic circumstances and scenery, he spent one day of parting love ere they were separated for ever, and by a yet ghastlier gulf than that of death.

2. Nothing is known about the cause of the accident which befell Burns but what he tells us—that his carriage was overturned by a drunken coachman, and his knee terribly bruised. This prevented him fulfilling an engagement with Clarinda, and gave him time for serious reflection and female correspondence. He did not confine on this any more than on other occasions his attentions to one lady, for we find him writing to Miss Chalmers too, expressing a wish that she and Charlotte Hamilton were with him to soothe his tedium and sorrows. He took, he tells us, tooth and nail to the Bible, and pronounces it a glorious book. He indited, at the suggestion of Charles Hay, advocate, a poetical elegy on the death of Dundas, the president of the Court of Session, of no great merit. He writes a funny letter to Francis Howden, jeweller, along with a silhouette portrait, in which he tells a familiar story ill—"Everybody has heard the auld wife's observation when she saw a poor dog going to be hanged. 'God help us, that's the gait we have a' to gang.'" This has no point. The real story is, that an ancient maiden, when she heard of a young lady being married, exclaimed, "That's the gait we maun a' gang." Howden used, to tell a story about Burns and Dr. Gregory. "Well, Burns, what sort of man was your father—a tall man?" "Yes: rather." "A dark-complexioned man?" "Yes." "And your mother?" "My mother was not a man at all." This, poor as it was, extinguished Gregory for the nonce by turning the laugh against him. He had his revenge when he wrote his critique on Burns' poem "On a Wounded Hare," and Burns cried out, "Gregory crucifies me!" Gregory attended Burns while ill with his accident, assisted by Alexander Wood, "Lang Sandy Wood" (see him admirably hit off by James Hogg in "Geordie Dobson's Expedition to Hell"), and gave him a present of Cicero's select Orations done into English, which he highly appreciated.

3. It is hardly worth while following all the ups and downs of this eccentric flirtation between Burns and Clarinda—their capping verses together; Burns alluding to this, and to Clarinda, in a letter to his old friend Richard Brown, calling her a young widow, and speaking of suicide (in terms which showed that nothing was farther from his thoughts); her trying to turn the affair into a religious courtship, and to elicit from him his theological opinions (whence comes in one letter Burns' Creed, a very interesting document, if not very orthodox); her allusion to a noted divine of the day, a Mr. Kemp, whom she wishes Burns to meet, and who, according to Mrs. Johnstone, got latterly into grief by the report that he extended his affections from the souls to the persons of his female devotees—a report the truth of which she leaves uncertain; the clandestine visits Burns at her request paid her; the dangers he repeatedly evaded of the moth approaching too near the candle, their interviews becoming more fascinating and perilous as his departure drew near; and, in fine, his leaving her for a season to meet again in 1791 and then to part for ever. We think every true admirer of Burns will be glad when this strange interlude in his history is over, and may sometimes regret that it has been brought out so much in detail before the public eye. In 1791, as we will hear again, Clarinda's husband, quite unexpectedly, invited her to Jamaica; she went, but was soon glad, from her experience of him and of the climate, to come back again. She was jealous of Burns, of his attentions to Peggy Chalmers, and very angry at his marriage with Jean. She died on the Calton Hill in 1841. Poor lady! she remembered Burns long and warmly. Thus she writes in her journal forty years after: 6th December, 1831—"This day I never can forget, parted with Burns in the year 1791, never more to meet in this world; Oh, may we meet in heaven!" She was of the same age with Burns, and survived him forty-five years. Chambers says, "I have heard Clarinda at seventy-five express the same hope to meet in another sphere the one heart she had ever found herself able entirely to sympathize with, but which had been divided from her on earth by such pitiless obstacles." This was in her very beautiful and natural, but leads to some odd thoughts and perplexed questions. Dr. William Anderson used to speak of the lover, Burns, meeting his "Mary" in Heaven; and the title of Burns' famous song, and an expression in one of his letters, would suggest that Burns expected this too. But Jean, his long tried and devoted wife, might be named as having also a claim to

"A blest and a blythe meeting there"

in the "Land of the Leal." The "Fairest Maid on Devon Banks" was in his mind's eye when he was about to leave the earth. Some enthusiasts might say that in that world of purity and peace, where they, being disembodied spirits, neither marry nor are given in marriage, all these angels might be with him and minister to him; but we shall say nothing on the subject.

During all this time he was not forgetting his friend Johnson, whose second volume appeared in February, 1788, containing some of Burns' finest songs, such as "MacPherson's Lament," and a few sentences in the Preface are from his pen. He had inserted in the "Museum" Clarinda's verses, "Talk not of Love," and a "Canzonet on a Blackbird," the production of the united hands of the two lovers. He had been feeling his way, too, toward a situation in the Excise, and his name had been enrolled in the list of expectant officers. He had been helped in this by Lang Sandy Wood, a kindred spirit, who notably resembled Burns in his liking for animals, and was seldom seen in Edinburgh on his professional visits without a pet sheep following him. It would be thought strange if the amiable "Rab" were seen with such a friend on his journeys of mercy through the Modern Athens now-a-days! Wood strongly backed the poet in his humble ambition to "gauge ale firkins!" Burns left Edinburgh on Monday the 18th of February, 1788. He went first to Glasgow to meet his old friend Richard Brown, and perhaps enjoy with him some exceptionable talk, as Lord Jeffrey would say; thence to Paisley; thence to Dunlop House, where he stayed two days; thence to Kilmarnock, writing to Clarinda at every stage, vowing eternal friendship, and so forth. On Monday the 25th he seems to have gone to Dumfriesshire along with Mr. James Tennant of Glenconnar to view and judge Miller's farms, with one of which he was greatly pleased, and it he afterwards took. We next find him at Mossgiel, where he found matters with Jean in a very strange way. It must be remembered that the marriage between him and Jean Armour might be considered cancelled by her conduct and that of her parents. When Burns returned triumphant the Armours fawned on him, and, as Burns tells us, made him very welcome to visit his girl, no doubt expecting that the renewed intimacy might lead to marriage after all. At this point, we imagine, Burns should have planted his foot, and never entered her house again. With a man of his temperament and former habits of familiarity visiting Jean was equivalent to falling into a scrape. This he felt when too late; and there can be little doubt that the disgust he expresses at her friends' obsequiousness was aggravated by his yielding to a seduction which he despised. Their conduct was that of the spider.

"Wilt thou walk into my parlour, said the spider to the fly."

And he walked in accordingly. What might have been expected followed—Jean became *enceinte*, and still no word of marriage. Nay, Burns was, and they certainly knew he was, in full cry after other ladies. This provoked the Armours excessively, and they cast out their daughter in the depth of winter; and she might have been miserably ill off had it not been for Mrs. Muir, wife of the owner of "Willie's Mill," who took her in, and treated her with great kindness before and after her *accouchement*, in this acting *pro* Burns.

Let us try to judge fairly while summing up the particulars of this strange matter:—1. The conduct of the Armours deserved all the condemnation of Burns. They had exposed their daughter to danger from mercenary motives, and had afterwards treated her very harshly—Mrs. Armour, indeed, so far relenting as to wait on Jean during her confinement. 2. Jean is more to be pitied than blamed. There was indeed a strong temptation to renew her intercourse with such a lover as Burns, but she should have resisted it. It would, we believe, have been far better for her had she never seen Burns again. 3. Burns, for his part, should be both pitied and blamed. If he still loved Jean with that wild, animal affection he had for her, it was wrong in him to seek her company. At all events, he saw very well where the danger lay, and "surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." His duty had been to have avoided the house entirely, unless he had had a distinct purpose of marriage. But notice, 4, how the case was now complicated on his return from Edinburgh. He found Jean cast out to the naked elements, in a condition calling for all his manly sympathy. This pointed to marriage as the only remedy. In opposition to this there were certain considerations:—1st. He had learned, and it was not his fault that he had done so, to appreciate a higher style of woman, and could not but contrast Jean with Miss Hamilton, Miss Chalmers, and others he had met and admired. 2nd. Jean must have lowered herself to a certain degree in his estimation by her recent conduct, and he must have shrunk from the thought of connecting himself with a family which had used him so ill. And then, 3rd, there was "Clarinda" entertaining the hope that she might yet win and keep him. Such was the many-forked dilemma in which Burns was placed; and it says a great deal for him that he determined to give to poor Jean the benefit of whatever doubts he might have as to the propriety of his conduct. It was mainly, we think, compassion which caused him make what was, in many points, a sacrifice. If so, it was virtue rewarded, for she turned out in many things an excellent helpmeet for him; and much of the real sunshine of his later life, besides that which broke on him fitfully from the smile of the Muse, came from the face of his faithful, industrious, and loving wife. He found for her a lodging in Mauchline, where she remained till he acknowledged her to be his wife—not formally at first, but according to Scotch fashion, by calling her "Mrs. Burns" publicly, in company and in correspondence. A friend of ours remembers well seeing in Mauchline the room and the bed where Burns and Jean first slept after their marriage was acknowledged.

Burns left Mauchline for Edinburgh on the 10th of March. A few days after he writes Miss Chalmers that he had taken Ellisland. Patrick Miller, brother of the Lord Justice Clerk, had lately become possessor of an estate which had once belonged to the family of Comyn, whose chief, the Red Comyn, had been stabbed by Bruce at Dumfries. On this estate of Dalswinton there were several farms, two of which were rich haugh ground bearing wheat, and the third, Ellisland, not nearly so rich. Burns, as Allan Cunningham's father told him, made a poet's choice, not a farmer's. Now it seems most beautifully situated, the river Nith flowing with measured majesty through bold banks and red scaurs, which are surmounted by the richest woodland; arable and pasture fields behind; Dalswinton and its deep groves on the other side of the stream; Friars' Carse a little way to the north-west; the house clean and plain — quite a model farm-house now as well as then—standing over the river, and before the barnyard where Burns produced his "Mary in Heaven;" altogether the sweetest, most romantic, and congenial piece of scenery which has any permanent connection with the history of Burns. Lochlea and Mossgiel have both features of interest, and around both, as well as around the cottage of his birth, are entwined more peculiar associations; but none of them can for a moment be compared for beauty with Ellisland. Could a poet fail to be happy here is a question which at once suggests itself at the first sight of the place. Assuredly there are other things necessary to happiness besides a beautiful locality; but it constitutes one element in a poet's life, which is by no means to be despised, and which it took a good deal in Burns' environment otherwise to counteract. We remember a man of great powers of mind, warm political feelings, and poetical temperament, unfavourably situated in a northern town, where he had a great deal of factious opposition to encounter which embittered and shortened his career, exclaiming, "Were it not for that glorious river (one of the finest of Highland streams) how wretched I should have been here!" And miserable as Burns often was at Ellisland, we believe he would have been more so had he not had the red scaur on which to stride, and the river to contemplate, now with calm emotion when it was calm, and now with a "stern delight and strange" when its waters were swollen and stormy, and his spirit required not so much solace as sympathy.

His landlord is said to have been kind to Burns in his bargain, giving him a lease of seventy-six years at an annual rent of £50 for the first three years, and £70 for the remainder, with other promised advantages. Miller was himself a remarkable man, of a mechanical genius, and was at this time employed in trying to propel vessels by means of paddles. He even built a vessel with paddles and a small steam-engine, and tried it on a lake near Dalswinton. The attempt was successful, but Miller did not persevere; although it was his boat when lying neglected at Port-Dundas that suggested to both Fulton and Henry Bell their better-considered mechanisms, by which the Hudson and the Clyde were to be peopled by those grand imperious vessels, which do not supplicate but force their way through the waves, and which, when traversed and opposed, wrestle like demons of kindred power and greater mastery with the angry billows. We remember seeing a mythical story of this Dalswinton voyage and its crew, said to consist, among others, of Burns and of Brougham, then a boy student out from Edinburgh; and it had been a capital subject for a Savage Landor to describe their forgathering, their talk during the day, and above all their symposium at night, and would remind one in some points of the scene described by Scott in his "Fair Maid of Perth"—the boy Crawford, the Tiger Earl, out-talking and out-drinking such an auld-used hand as Sir John Ramorny! But the story is, we suspect, a mere fable.

On the 13th March Burns concluded his arrangement with Miller, and on the 20th of the same month he completed his reckoning with the much-revolving and slow-rendering William Creech. There are here some puzzling contradictions in statements of facts. On the one hand, Burns himself says to Dr. Moore, "I believe I shall clear about £400, some little odds; but even part of this depends on what the gentleman (Creech) has yet to settle with me." Currie, again, declares at the close of his memoir, that Burns received a clear profit of £900. William Nicol wrote to Mr. Lewars, after the poet's death, that Burns told him that he received £600 for the Edinburgh edition, and £100 after for the copyright. Heron, again, says that the whole sum paid to the poet for the copyright, and for the subscription copies of this book, amounted to nearly £1100. Out of this the expenses of printing the edition for the subscribers must be deducted. The probability is that Burns only realized £400. For whatever the round sum he got, there would be deducted from it not only the printing expenses, but certain debts which we are told the poet had contracted in Edinburgh, and thus there would be left only £400, and a little odds, as he admits there was. During this process of arrangement Burns describes himself as nearly crazed, and actually fevered. No wonder.

On the 24th March, 1788, he left Edinburgh permanently, doubtless with mingled emotions of gratitude, grief, and perplexity, with life absolutely to begin again at the age of twenty-nine. He went first to Glasgow, and thence by a rapid movement to Dumfriesshire. While in Edinburgh he must have heard that Jean had born him twins, both of whom soon died. On the 30th of March we find him riding across a track of melancholy moors between Glasgow and Ayrshire on a Sabbath

day, and composing some stanzas, which he afterwards interwove into the "Chevalier's Lament," and which bear a strong testimony to the dreary state of his mind. It might have been called Burns' Lament, not alas! his last one: for the rest of the life of this most blithesome (at times) of the sons of men, and who sometimes drank out larger draughts of intellectual, social, animal, and moral pleasure, than any other man—to whom, indeed, the word enjoyment meant something else than to most of his kind—meant rapture or ecstasy—was to be one long lamentation seldom briefly and irregularly interrupted by what ought to have been in happier circumstances the normal tenor of his existence. He went next to Ayrshire to receive instructions for an exciseman; and Mr. James Findlay, Tarbolton, had a charge from the worshipful Excise Commissioners "to instruct the bearer, Robert Burns, in the art of gauging casks, and fitting him for surveying victuallers, rectifiers, chandlers, tanners, tawers, &c.; and after Robert Burns has been six weeks thus engaged, certifying that he hath cleared his quarters both for lodgings and diet, and that he has actually paid each of you for his instructions and examination, and that he hath sufficient at the time to purchase a horse for the business." A more humiliating document our country does not possess amidst all her records, from the Ragman's-roll downwards! The brightest, and not by many, many degrees the worst man in Scotland, doomed to such drudgery as preliminary to drudgery of a similar sort ranging over his whole future life! And how few *felt* the appalling anti-climax of the author of the "Cottar's Saturday Night" studying gauging for six weeks at Tarbolton under the eye of a supervisor, James Findlay by name. Nay, we question if he felt it fully himself; had he done so, we would not have answered for the consequences. Nevertheless he had some real happiness even then, as all men may reach at any time by virtuous action. He had before refused to Gavin Hamilton to be security for his brother, but had truly said that the language of refusal was to him the most difficult of all language. It was his misfortune, not his fault surely, that his lips could not easily fold around the monosyllable "No." Now, however, he gave his brother Gilbert, who was in difficulties and had the support of poor old Mrs. Burns on his shoulders, £180, about the half he had himself. It was strictly more a gift to his mother than to his brother, and given at interest. The rest of the sum he put into his farm, with as little result ultimately as if he had thrown it into the Nith.

Jean was with him while he was receiving his instructions in the Excise mysteries. Chambers says she preferred another to Burns, and we hardly wonder at it. She was, we think, incapable of appreciating him fully in himself, or of seeing him except in the reflex light of the admiration of others. And she knew his faults so thoroughly. Indeed, our astonishment is that, all things considered, the marriage turned out so well. As there was little love to begin with, the wonder was that, like Slender's, it did not decrease on better acquaintance. With a little money, however, a little experience, Jean less "glaikit" than she had been, and Burns a sadder and thinking himself a wiser man, "they," as one in "Caleb Williams" has it, "turned in together, and thought they would rub on main well with one another." And so in a manner they did, and the longer the better.

Chambers closes his account of what may be called the Edinburgh section of Burns' life with some remarks breathing a good spirit, but hardly germane to the matter. His talk of Burns as being a prophet, a Prometheus, and sustaining such a character in Edinburgh, is more suited to the high-wrought, self-reflecting nature of a Carlyle than to his own sober and sensible style of thought. We think Burns far greater, though not better, in Dumfries, writing his songs or cherishing his solitary ideals, rejected by the select society of the place, walking out lowering and lonely to Lincluden Abbey, or taking the shady side of the street, than when he was the pet of the Edinburgh public. All we can say of him then is that in Edinburgh his head was not turned nor his self-possession lost. It may be said that it was the Sun, and not the Wind, which made the traveller loosen his cloak. But what were the soft airs and warm glances of his Edinburgh experience, as a trial of manhood, compared with the forces of the Sun of Sahara and the Simoom, which united latterly against his naked head? Yet them he withstood. He died, indeed, but died not yielding to them, but yielding to his own passions and appetites; for, like Byron's wounded eagle,

> "He nursed the pinion that propelled the steel."

None but himself was able to destroy himself. He had undoubtedly a contempt for pensions, but it does not seem to us a wise contempt. Did a pension necessarily compromise independence? Were all pensions bribes? He thought a pension a "collar;" but was it not sometimes a becoming badge, such as he had given to his own "Cæsar?"

> "His lockit, lettered, braw, brass collar,
> Showed him the gentleman and scholar."

In his wild spirit of independence Burns would have spurned even "fairy gold," had it fallen at his door. There was but one man living then in Britain Burns' superior—namely, Edmund Burke, his equal in genius, and incomparably his superior in acquirements. He accepted a pension, and the most eloquent and powerful of his writings—his "Letter to a Noble Lord" and his "Letters on a Regicide Peace"—arose to the tune of Government ingots. He felt he had a title to what he received, and that gave him a proud honesty in using it; and within his pension, as within a bank, the noble stream of his genius flowed on with equal dignity and with greater power than before.

CHAPTER XI.

ELLISLAND.

ELLISLAND was in the full flush of summer when, on the 13th of June, 1788, Burns took possession. It needed all the music, and flowers, and foliage of the leafy month, to cheer up to his eye the circumstances amidst which he came to it. There was an old steading to be taken down; there was a new house to be built; Jean, with her sole surviving child, was far off in Ayrshire, and was not expected in a hurry. All was annoyingly and disappointingly new. He was alone. His Muse at first was shy, and his prose journal and his correspondence became his only safety valves. He speaks of the "foggy atmosphere of his soul," as if his years were now "all winters," to use that gasp of poor Byron's. He praises Jean to Mrs. Dunlop, determined to make the best of his bargain. He gives a great many reasons for his marriage, besides "rooted attachment," which itself might have been sufficient—reasons, however, which the reader, remembering his quite recent flirtations with Clarinda, is not very much disposed as a whole to believe. He has now reached the poet's dream—"Love in a Cottage;" but, alas! the cottage is smoky—

> "The red peat gleams a fiery kernel,
> Encircled by a fog infernal,"

and he is far from his Love. Her absence, however, made his heart grow fonder, and he poured out the exquisite song, "Of a' the Airts the Wind can Blaw," showing how, while prose could only lamely argue out his case in the matter of the marriage, poetry could create passion where it was not, or stir up the last fading embers into a youthful blaze. One might imagine in reading "Of a' the Airts," and "Were I on Parnassus' Hill," that they were the effusions of a boy lover. It casts a curious light on song writing, as the outcome of the sincerity or depth of love, to know that the best verses in "Of a' the Airts" (Oh! blaw, ye westland winds, blaw saft, &c.), are not by Burns at all, but by one John Hamilton, a music-seller in Edinburgh. But these songs of Burns show that he was trying to recall the old love of his espousals, and to reconcile at once himself and his wife to their inevitable lot.

While thus musing and rhyming in solitude, he sometimes employed his leisure in wandering through the grounds of Friars' Carse—an estate lying northward from Ellisland, belonging to Captain Riddell of Glenriddell, a man of antiquarian and literary taste, and of a social turn. His mansion was once a monastic establishment, and stands on a rocky promontory overlooking the Nith, with a long strip of alluvial soil [carse] stretching eastward through shrubberies—hence the compound word Friars' Carse. Here Burns, furnished with a key, often wandered, not, however, as Robert Chambers describes him, with "hope green in his bosom," but with pensive and melancholy thoughts, which he expresses without disguise in his journal, but which, toned down, took the form of his "Verses written in Friars' Carse Hermitage," a rural cot Riddell had constructed near the house. These bear the date of 28th June, but were altered and a little expanded afterwards.

Burns was now, if we believe Allan Cunningham, a "busy and a happy man;" presiding over the building of his new house and steading. That he was busy is unquestionable; but as the business and other circumstances were not congenial, we doubt the happiness. He worked on, however, energetically, "digging foundations, collecting stones, seeking sand, carting lime, and even laying on the stones of the house." The result was, as we can vouch, a pleasant humble cottage near the red scaur he loved; with a sitting room on the east, looking down on the stream and valley; a west room called the Spence, where guests of distinction, like Sir Egerton Brydges, would dine with Burns; a kitchen and a bedroom lying between, and a garret. A well was in a bank below; and a barn, stackyard, byre, and stable were behind.

At Communions of old time, and not indeed very long since, there was a general washing and clearing of reputations, like the Whitsuntide cleanings; and on the Monday after the town or village looked, to use Andrew Fairservice's language (in "Rob Roy"), as "crouse as a cat when all the flaes are kamed aff her;" and the streets presented a kind of jaunty, jail-delivery aspect, partly because the old sins were condoned, and partly because new ones might now be contracted with impunity till the next year! One of these annual atonement days now

reached the village of Mauchline on the 5th of August, 1788; and Robert Burns and Jean Armour compeared before the Session for the last time, were rebuked for their past irregularity, their marriage formally acknowledged, the parties solemnly exhorted to adhere faithfully to each other as man and wife, and the amount of the fee usual on such occasions for the poor left to the generosity of "Mr. Burns." "Mr. Burns," it is added, gave a guinea note on behalf of the poor. Thus under difficulties was the complete consummation of the marriage between this immortal pair attained at last, and Burns might and did exclaim—

"I hae a wife o' my ain."

Extremely miserable at Ellisland, as some of his letters prove him, Burns was rather often repairing to Ayrshire to meet his Jean, and to string again his lyre, which had become somewhat "becobwebbed" in the hut on his farm. One of these productions was a "Fête Champetre," written on the occasion of a gay supper or ball given by Mr. Cunningham of Enterkin, who, it was said, meant it for an electioneering feast, as he intended to canvass Ayrshire, an intention he afterwards relinquished. It was the first specimen of a style which Burns often practised afterwards, and in which, as in most styles, he excelled, but which was hardly worthy of his genius, it being thoroughly artificial—its inspiration, party spirit; and its result, clever personality; and on its point, as on a bright prong, many insipid and worthless characters are suspended and immortalized. Soon after this he was advised to try English instead of Scotch verse, and produced the first of three Epistles to Mr. Graham of Fintry, which are certainly not the most felicitous of his writings, but forced and powerless. When a Highland woman got excited in conversation she began to talk good English instead of Gaelic, and then it was said, "Ye have gotten to your English." So Burns sometimes, as in his "Vision" and the close of his "Cottar's Saturday Night," got to his English, and was never better, or so good. But in these "Epistles to Graham," and some other productions, he began with his English, and conspicuously failed. Yet the following are manly lines:—

"Ere my poor soul such deep damnation stain,
My horny fist assume the plough again,
The piebald jacket let me patch once more;
On eighteen pence a week I've lived before."

Still wearying for his wife, he writes a letter to Miss Chalmers in her praise. He says, "I have not got modish manners, polite tattle, and fashionable dress." One might think of the fox and the grapes; but he adds, "I have got the handsomest figure, the sweetest temper, the soundest constitution, and the kindest heart in the country." This cluster of superlatives seems a little overdone, and, as formerly, distance is lending enchantment to the view. Yet he did undoubtedly like Jean better after she was made "an honest woman," and when, like many Scotch women of humble life, who were erratic before, she was likely to prove, and did prove, an excellent and devoted wife. At last, after Burns had been compelled to enter his new house before it was plastered, and to suffer all that damp and disarray could add to his previous discomfort, came bleak December with its horrors and its memories, and in stept Jean, like a winter sun-glint, to minister a little light and comfort. The new house was not fit for her as yet, and she had to go to a neighbouring farm, which stood on what is called the Isle—a piece of ground once encircled by the Nith, in the immediate proximity of the old churchyard of Dunscore, which contained the tomb of Grierson of Lagg, the noted persecutor; and as it was thought at that time haunted, it was at present without a tenant. In this "ruined grange," as Shakspeare has it, Jean Armour, now Mrs. Burns, was installed mistress. It was rather a gloomy and ominous place she had reached, but it was her home—the first she could really call her own. Burns was with her, and her flitting had come safely the week before, including a fine four-posted bed, presented her by Mrs. Dunlop. A west-country servant, Elizabeth Smith, daughter of an exemplary parent, who had charged Burns to look after her morals, and

"On the Questions tairge her tichtly"

(and she used to say that he did so faithfully), had arrived. Not a mile up the stream the new house of Ellisland was getting ready for his wife's reception; and we have no doubt that, composed if not gleeful, she accepted the circumstances of her situation, and had no prophetic glimpse of the haggard destiny which here and elsewhere lay before her lord and herself.

Her coming seemed to rouse the old soul of song within him. He had written previously one on Captain Riddell's marriage—"The day returns, my bosom burns"—and an elegy on the death of a promising son of Fergusson of Craigdarroch. But these, though good, bore no proportion to the two charming songs, both dated Ellisland, the 17th of December—"Auld Langsyne" and "Bonny Mary"—

"Go fetch to me a pint of wine"—

both pretending to be old, but both stamped in the fresh burning mint of his own genius. It was, for the nonce, a happy and half-inspired man who, on one day (the 1st January, 1789) wrote that letter to Gilbert Burns, so honourable to his heart and filial piety, and that other letter to Mrs. Dunlop, so characteristic of his sensibility, native taste, and imaginative power. Surely, we say, habitual happiness would have made this man always good and true to himself; or surely, at least, elements

could have been mingled in his cup which might have made it a sweeter and a holier one. What might not fuller recognition, better society, a more congenial employment, a little more money, along with this new domestic comfort, have done for him, to save him from temptation and to minister to him peace! Such thoughts will pass through our minds, useless as they may be deemed; he was so worth saving, not so much as a poet, in which he has in spite of everything gained the highest honours, but as a man.

A month previously, on occasion of an attack being made on the memory of the Stuarts by the Rev. Mr. Kirkpatrick of Dunscore, he wrote an indignant and eloquent letter to the London *Star*, a paper conducted by John Mayne (author of "The Siller Gun"), a native of Dumfriesshire. It seemed the last expression of Burns' Jacobite loyalty. We meet with that very seldom, if ever afterwards, either in his prose or verse.

He began very soon to have doubts as to the success of his farm, and this made him exert every influence to get an Excise appointment in the district where it was situated. His acerbity seems in a short time to have returned, as we judge from a letter to Dugald Stewart, in which he speaks of a projected work, entitled "The Poet's Progress," and gives as a specimen a character of Creech, whom he regarded at that time with great bitterness and aversion. It is a mercy for Burns that this poem was never carried further, since, in the first place, it would have been another effort in that style of laboured and heavy satire which he had begun in his Letter to Graham of Fintry, and which, when compared to his earlier effusions, resembles the sluggish flight and blunted blow of a heron beside the rapid swoop and sharp decisive stroke of an eagle; and because, secondly, to Creech it would have been, on the whole, unfair. All his fellows in trade maintained that Creech was incapable of wilful injustice, though not incapable of remissness, craft, and negligence. But the fact is that Burns, whenever unhappy in himself or in his environment, threw out and partially relieved his misery by fierce and unprovoked attacks on others, and this he was most apt to do when unduly excited. He was, besides, haunted by an ambition to be a great satirist, one of the most wretched of literary callings; and for which, if his wit and humour fitted him, his naturally kind disposition and his solid judgment were as certainly disqualifications. His misery more than his will consented to write bitter things, and his irregularities coincided. But whenever he was comparatively happy, and this was not infrequent, and when his intellect was in its average state of manly clearness, he deplored what he had written; and such is very nearly the way in which we account for his obscene verses. In heated passion he wrote; in hours of calm reflection he regretted them. In Byron it was not quite the same. He had not such warm and generous feelings as Burns—was more permanently and less reasonably soured—did not, however, commit himself so much as the Scottish poet either in severity or in smut, but went to the unhappy work with more coolness and deliberation. We can never conceive Burns thrusting his character of Creech under the Bibliopole's chair, as Byron did, under Rogers', his Satanic philippic on that poet. Burns' "Creechiad, or Progress of a Poet," was never completed. The letters to the bookseller—some of them intemperate enough—were submitted to the eye of Miss Chalmers, who got them destroyed, and long before the Poet's death the two were reconciled. Dr. Currie speaks somewhat doubtfully of the rides Burns took while still Jean was in the West, as exposing him to danger; and Professor Wilson has most unmercifully ridiculed the idea of there being no safety for Burns in Sanquhar, and of it being impossible for him to pass the door of a public-house in Thornhill; and says that if this were the case, he should have been shut up in a lunatic asylum. And here Wilson is substantially right. Burns, though far too social, and though he might have what is proverbially called a "spark in his throat," a complaint very common in his day, was by no means in danger of becoming a victim or habitual debauchee. To say he never drank alone is not true, since in his letters he speaks several times of doing so, even to intoxication (see letter from Ecclefechan); but that he often debauched himself by himself or in his own house is not proven, and is not very likely. Like Falstaff, "villanous company" was his undoing, and often company not very select; an honest Boniface, a "pursy" old landlord, "waddling upstairs" with his huge "jeroboam" in his shaky hand; a bagman from the south or a pedlar from the north; a hedge schoolmaster or a landlady like that accommodating she of "Tam o' Shanter"—any of these were good enough "to drink with," and he extracted from them humour and character, and various poetical material. Now and then, no doubt, in his rides to Ayrshire he found reunions collected for him, and receptions given, which implied a late sitting and a late rising, with a dreadful headache, and, as he confesses to his brother William, with an addled brain. But nothing that would then be considered very serious happened: and for such excesses as he committed and confessed to Jean, she would give him a gentle shrift. Once or twice he met with strange adventures, one of which will be found described by himself in reference to the funeral retinue of Mrs. Oswald of Auchencruive, driving him out from a snug room, fire, and smoking bowl, through moors, mosses, and snow drifts, to New Cumnock. The defunct lady, we believe, was as much to blame for his exclusion from the inn as for the other charges brought against her in the portentous ode beginning—

"Dweller in yon dungeon dark."

In February he visited Edinburgh to receive £50 which Creech was owing him for sales effected since the final settlement, and with which Burns seems to have been satisfied. His younger brother, William, had at this time called at the Isle, and been kindly received. Burns addressed to him some very brotherly and sensible letters (to be found fully in CORRESPONDENCE). He was a saddler first in Newcastle and afterwards in London, and died in the latter place in July, 1790. He lies in Paul's Churchyard. He seems to have been a quiet, steady, commonplace, un-Burnsian, but worthy kind of man.

Burns did not call on "Clarinda" when in Edinburgh. That she expected and wished for him we gather from the fact that she tells Ainslie that she was determined to avoid her windows when he was in town, lest she should catch even a glimpse of him from them! She wrote him soon after in upbraiding terms about his marriage; and he replied in a tone half savage, half soft, vindicating himself vigorously, reproaching her gently, throwing out hints about his severe struggles, and pointing back to the "mirk night of December,"

"When sparkling was the rosy wine, and private was the chamber,"

with a finger which seemed to tremble at the recollection, rather with joy and glad reminiscence than with regret. He began at this time to bear the penalties of successful authorship, partly by having books or MSS. submitted to his opinion or revision, and partly by finding himself patronized by men who were his inferiors in everything but popularity and a better account at their booksellers than his. Yet Dr. Moore's letters, while a little too consciously condescending in their tone, are both friendly and discriminating. Still, in advising him to give up the Scottish language in his compositions, he shows that he had no conception that Burns was a national poet—the national poet of his country. Burns was not only the greatest British poet living, but Scotland was his special province, and her language on his lips was royal.

In poetry he was doing little, and that little of no great importance or sufficiently characteristic—a few trifles, such as his rhymed sketch of Charles James Fox; "Delia," which, though doubted to be his, he unquestionably sent to the London *Star;* his clever octosyllabics "To James Tennant of Glenconnar," an old and tried friend of the poet's and his family, whom we have seen helping him in his choice of Ellisland;* his lines on a "Wounded Hare," which are more creditable to his humanity than to his poetic powers, although, if the *lout* was cruel to the hare when shooting her with young, Dr. Gregory was equally so in his savage hypercriticism on the poem—a critique done with true professional *animus*, as if to show he had seldom such a fine subject for his scalpel; and his "Address to the Toothache," worthy of the days of the "Louse" and the "Haggis," and which we know has been read for consolation by the martyrs of the malady, and has given to sad despair

"A gloomy smile."

Some of these he despatched to Creech, who talked of publishing a new edition of the poet's works, but paid him nothing for these additional pieces in the meantime.

A few miles from Ellisland, to the north-west, lies a fine undulating country, stretching toward the little village of Dunscore; on the south are the hills of Irongray, a bold and rugged range; in the valley at their feet, in the centre of a wood, stands the monument erected by Sir Walter Scott to Helen Walker, the prototype of Jeanie Deans, where we have been; and in the midst of them lies Craigenputtock, the property and once the dwelling-place of Thomas Carlyle—a gloomy place, we are told, with its dark firs around and melancholy moors behind, reminding visitors, who are also readers, of the pine-shadowed and moated castle where Maturin describes his dark Knight of the Forest keeping his state, and conversing at the portals with those doomed ones who came to consult him and inhale all hell through his half-shut visor, as

"Rolls the rich thunder of his awful voice"

in that

"*Infernal* colloquy sublime,"

and who remained his vassals and victims forever more! It was of Dunscore auld kirk that Carlyle said to Emerson, when the latter was sounding him on religious subjects, "Christ died on the Cross, and that built Dunscore kirk in the valley down there, and brought you and me together." They were standing on a hill behind Monyaive. In that kirk, in Burns' day, there laboured a Mr. Kirkpatrick, a Calvinistic clergyman of the old school, whose public teaching was in inverse ratio and dismal antithesis to his private benevolence. He was a blameless and good man; but his doctrine made Burns, not unaccustomed to the habit, to "blaspheme an octave higher," and to cry out "From such conceptions of my Creator good Lord deliver me." He seems to have had a wicked pleasure, while Mr. Kirkpatrick was preaching, in silently tearing asunder the webs of argument the preacher had been laboriously weaving, and would come home often on the tiptoe of triumph at his success. One remembers Theodore Parker listening for years to Lyman Beecher! There is a story about the minister having rather maltreated the poet. Burns, highly to his credit, had got up a library in the parish. Sir John Sinclair had begun to prepare his great statistical work on Scotland, and had applied to Mr. Kirkpatrick, as he did to hundreds of parish ministers, for information. In his reply, we have been

* The late Charles Tennant, Esq., of St. Rollox, was a son of his.

told that Kirkpatrick deliberately suppressed the fact of Burns having instituted a library at Dunscore; and that Burns, in indignation, wrote Sir John on the subject. We find no such letter among his Correspondence, although in Mr. MacDowell's interesting notices of Burns' closing days there is a reference to a letter from Captain Riddell to Sinclair on the matter. If Kirkpatrick did omit to mention it out of spite to Burns, it was mean; but then we must remember that he was not only a Calvinist, but a heresy-hunter! and this should cover a multitude of sins.

At this time occurred the famous case of Dr. William MacGill of Ayr, who was tried for Socinian error, and in defence of whom Burns wrote the "Kirk's Alarm," a piece of very considerable point; although he was only half-hearted in his satirical poems—showed rather the power than the will to sting, and wanted something of the savage gusto of a Swift or a Byron. MacGill was a very respectable but odd man; he escaped by making sundry concessions to his adversaries, and died reputed a saint, if not an orthodox divine, at the age of seventy-six. Late on in summer Burns took possession at last of Ellisland. He did so in a peculiar and poetic fashion. He told his servant, little Elizabeth Smith, to take the family Bible with a bowl of salt, placing the one above the other, and walk on from the Isle to the new house, and take care to enter before any other person. This was the old *freit* to secure good luck. He and his wife followed—a peculiar couple—he strong, swarthy, somewhat stooped, striding manfully along; his wife, tall, fair, and though not remarkably beautiful, rather handsome; with little Betty, the Bible, and the salt: the whole procession advancing picturesquely, perhaps with involuntary laughter on his part and a look of puzzled pleasure on Jean's, along the brushwood banks of the Nith to their common home. Did the salt spill as the party were entering, and did he read in this the disturbance of the *freit*, and an omen of the dark future? Burns, superstitious from his constitution, habits, and education, was fond of visits to the Witch of Endor Cavern, to inquire as to the *to come;* although, to his knocking at the door of Destiny, there was but the old reply—the echo of the sound he himself had made, or a voice like that of hollow laughter, shivering and dying away in the distance!

Burns had now some critical correspondence with Miss Helen Maria Williams (see Boswell's Johnson) anent a poem of her's, long since forgotten, on the Slave Trade; and with the brothers Stuart, three remarkable Scotchmen connected with the London Press, one of whom enjoyed the applause and friendship of Coleridge and inherited the hatred and rampant abuse of William Cobbett. On the 18th of August his wife bore the poet another son, whom he called Francis Wallace, in honour of Mrs. Dunlop. He now saw, more forcibly than ever, the necessity of having two strings to his bow, and applied to Mr. Graham to be appointed excise-officer of the country district where he lived. He meant to make his farm principally a dairy farm, with which branch his sisters were most conversant, so that, while they and his wife might manage the cows and milk, he might attend to his excise duties. One of the Stuarts had known Robert Fergusson, and his allusions to him called forth some plaintive letters from Burns anent his case, with a kind of prophetic murmur in them, as if the fate of the admired might be soon that of the admirer. Indeed, his too intense sympathy with him was itself an unconscious prediction of this.

Yet now let all gloom for a season be dismissed! From o'er the hills and far away let two kindred spirits arrive (like spate-swollen tributaries, the Cairn and the Scaur, to join the Nith) to mingle with the Burns river, relieving its monotony, and making it resound with the joy of waves! Let William Nicol, Allan Masterton, and Robert Burns compear together, and let Moffat be the meeting place of the three friends, determined for one night to be as happy as the dreams of avarice or the realities of royalty! There are some perplexities about the date and place. Allan Cunningham says it was the heating of the house of Laggan, a small estate which Nicol had purchased in the parish of Glencairn. But the inexorable evidence of documents seems to prove that Nicol had not entered on his estate till 1790, a year after this jovial meeting. Burns speaks of Moffat as the scene; but if so, how came Nicol to brew a "peck o' maut" there? a process which would have been natural enough at the farm town of Laggan. At all events the orgy took place; and however strange it may seem now in the eyes of Good Templarism or of sober sense, there can be no doubt it was a joyous one; not a coarse Bacchanalian carousal but "the feast of reason and the flow of soul." They were all superior men, and their talk that night, be sure, was not "of bullocks." It was quite a *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, and since all three, the Laird of Laggan's many hills, the fine-hearted teacher of English in the Edinburgh High School, and the Poet of all time, are dead, and such symposia are past, we presume for ever, let us not be too severe on its memory. Let us charitably believe that all went to bed sober; and though it was sung—

> "Wha last beside his chair shall fa',
> He is the king amang us three,"

that the feast ended as it began, in a republic, not a monarchy. Now it seems, through the vista of eighty-nine years, a feast of Valhalla—the "maut" and the symposiasts are alike shadows, and it is the ghost of a moon which sheds her evasive light and lifts her hollow horn over the ghastly revellers. The "ae nicht" was not followed by a second till some years afterwards, when we

find the three in Dumfries together for a week and more at the old work.

This autumn, too, occurred the contest of the "Whistle." Burns' account of the tradition from which it sprang will be found along with the poem. Charles Sharpe exposes some errors in it; but the whole story is evidently mythical, remotely founded on fact. The contest this year was to be between Captain Riddell of Glencarse, Mr. Fergusson of Craigdarroch, and Sir Robert Lawrie of Maxwelltown, then M.P. for Dumfriesshire. Fergusson gained the day. Burns was present, being invited to attend the party to see that the gentlemen drank fair, and to write a poem on the subject. An eye-witness, William Hunter, told Chambers he remembered the whole transaction, being then a servant at Friars' Carse. Burns took no part in the proceedings, sat by himself drinking only a little brandy, was quite sober, and left on his own feet after they were carried to bed. He wrote at a side table the verses, and read them over and over to the gentlemen to their great amusement. So far well. But think of Burns being present as a kind of flunkey or waiter at such a scene, and compelled to draw inspiration from it! His position at "Willie brewed a peck o' maut" rises to judicial sobriety and dignity compared to this. The ebony whistle remained with Mr. Fergusson of Craigdarroch, son of the victor, M.P. for the county of Kirkcudbright. Will it be believed that the author of these pages, along with another clergyman from the neighbourhood of Dumfries, called in June, 1865, on an English family which had taken Friars' Carse for the season—people genteel in appearance, in respectable circumstances, and exceedingly polite, tradespeople hailing from London; and when we asked to see the room where, according to Robert Burns, the "Whistle" contest took place, we found they had never heard of it, and had never heard of Robert Burns! Such are—

"The glory and the nothing of a name."

This autumn Burns composed his "Mary in Heaven," or rather, like many of his poems, it came upon him in remarkable circumstances, observed by his wife, and afterwards recorded by Lockhart and his other biographers. How forcibly they were recalled to us when, after our visit to Friars' Carse and our unique adventure there, we strolled in the fine sunset to the barn-yard behind Ellisland, and the whole scene and a portion of the agony, too, were reproduced as we repeated the lines—

"O, Mary, dear departed shade,
Where is thy place of blissful rest?
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?"

In such hours as those, which so rarely occur in life, when the heart is forced back by intense realization of the woes of others on perished passages of its own past, it knoweth its own bitterness, and feels it partly relieved and partly increased, and that such a mingled feeling is far more precious and far more dear than the most exquisite enjoyments. Bruise down joy sufficiently, and it yields sorrow; and bruise down misery sufficiently, and it yields deep, though pensive and peculiar joy; and whatever be the case with the joy which ends in sorrow, with that which arises from it no stranger can intermeddle. It is beyond the name of pleasure; it is too deep for tears.

Burns was labouring under a cold, but still in fair spirits, and busy at his harvest work. As the evening drew on he appeared to get very sad about something, and instead of entering the house went to the barn-yard, and continued there in spite of his wife's reminding him that it was frost; wandering up and down, throwing himself on a mass of straw and fixing his eyes on the starry firmament, especially on one bright planet which shone like another moon.* At length he came in, called for his desk, and wrote "To Mary in Heaven." Chambers is at great pains to show that this took place on the 20th of October, 1789, that being a late season, and that this supplies the date of Mary's death. He proves what is more remarkable, that Venus was not then a morning, but an evening star, and not the "star that ushers in the morn." Perhaps Burns took a poetical license. Chambers wonders how Burns can, after he had met with Charlotte Hamilton, Margaret Chalmers, and Clarinda, revert so fondly to this simple country girl. But he forgets they were still living, Mary was dead. They were brilliant figures which crossed his stage; she was his betrothed wife, dear to him as the ruddy drops that visited his sad heart, and torn by a malignant fever, as by the hand of a demon, from his very arms. He loved to observe anniversaries, and here was seemingly the third one of his great loss; and in the transfiguring mood of his imagination, stirred by the unspeakable charm of autumn eve, he must shrine his loved one in heaven. It might be, too, that a tinge of remorse was in his bosom, else why should he talk, three years after her death, of his anguished bosom and heavy groans? In quite a different vein he wrote the next day to kind old Blacklock, and soon after we find him much in the society of a man who did a great deal to get Burns to forget his poverty and remember his misery no more—the redoubtable Captain Grose. Francis Grose, an Englishman, had seen better days, but had been compelled to live by his wits, and had—

"Ta'en the antiquarian trade,"
I think they call it."

He was a wit, scholar, humorist, and *bon vivant*, in

* Sir John Steel has thus represented him, in his magnificent statue of Burns.

person fat and little, had come to Friars' Carse to collect antiquities, and was a great favourite with Captain Riddell and his circle. He was getting up a work on Scottish antiquities, to which Burns, as we shall see, made a most important poetic contribution. At table Grose was fully a match for Burns in fun and anecdote; but Burns in his poems, and sometimes in talk, too, possessing the power of imagination, which Grose had not, could and did, by a single flash, at once illuminate and eclipse him. See his verses on Grose's peregrinations in Scotland in his oldest and best satirical vein. It was much the same with Patrick Robertson and Christopher North. Both were witty, one only a man of genius. Both were stout men; but Robertson was coarse and flabby. "You are getting enormously fat, Professor Wilson." "Yes," was his reply, "but not like many fat people, *loathsome*."

Meanwhile, our Poet had become, as he says, "a mighty exciseman before the Lord," doing his drudgery and scrub work with immense energy. John Newton said once, that if the angel Gabriel were appointed a shoe-black on earth he would be the best shoe-black in the parish; and so Burns, reduced to stoop and slave, must stoop with dignity and slave with diligence. He had the charge of ten parishes, and rode often two hundred miles a week. He was severe in general on the smuggler; but he knew how to temper justice with mercy. Professor Gillespie saw him once entering the house of a poor widow who sold whisky, to give her the hint to put her barrels out of the way, as the supervisor was coming. On another occasion he stept into a house where the wife was shrewdly suspected of selling a contraband dram, and sought for a gill and some bread and cheese; and after discussing them, he asked her, "Well, Jean, what's to pay for the whisky?" to which she archly replied, "Oh, naething ava for the whisky, but there's saxpence for bread and cheese." "Sin on, and fear not," was his laughing rejoinder as he left the house.

Once, according to the late esteemed Mr. Rodgerson, United Presbyterian minister of Thornhill, he was fairly *done* by a smuggler. A cart came to the inn at Thornhill with a number of barrels, on which Burns instantly *pounced*. The smuggler came up, and with tears in his eyes told a distressing story of a poor starving family, and so forth. Burns was quite melted, let the man off, and even gave him a pound. He had no sooner left than the barrels were examined, and lo! were filled with water. He found his continual riding over hill and dale rather laborious, although conducive to health and to that wayward and excursive tone of mind which a poet loves. Nor was this mode of life without its pleasant relaxations. There were respectable people here and there to whom his approach was an advent, who appreciated his genius, and admired his social qualities and conversational powers. One of these was the Rev. Mr. Jeffrey, minister of Lochmaben. He had a lively blue-eyed daughter. She had received him one night at the manse after a long ride very kindly; had given him a dish of tea or whatever might best contribute to his comfort. He brought down the next morning to breakfast one of the sweetest of his smaller lyrics—

"I gaed a waefu' gate yestreen,"

which we may be excused for saying we heard sung by an uncle of our own and namefather—the late Mr. George Barlas, of Glasgow, a *non-professional*—in tones of melting sweetness and manly pathos, which no stage ever excelled, and which delicious tears praised more eloquently and sincerely than could a thousand plaudits!

This blue-eyed lassie married a Mr. Renwick in New York, and afterwards gave a Scotchman a charming picture of Burns coming in to her father's house on cold rainy nights after long riding among the moors—of his manly and luminous talk, his easy and affable manners, and added, she "never could fancy that Burns followed the occupation of the plough, because everything he said or did had a gracefulness and charm that were in an extraordinary degree engaging." It is well when people are thankful for the gift of earthly immortality, and prove this by speaking with respect as well as gratitude of the donor.

And now 1790 had arrived and brought with it various verses, a Sketch, addressed to Mrs. Dunlop, and a Prologue, spoken at the Dumfries theatre on New-year's evening, communicated by him to Mr. Sutherland, a friend of David Campbell, of Ayr. But it brought also carking cares connected with business, bad prospects for his farm, and a gloomy state of mind. He had, he says, a bad tract of health most of the winter. Consequently, the first letters of the year are darkened by the heaviest hypochondria. It is sad to think that when a life is to be so short it should be so miserable. Burns did not attain even to a short life and a merry one. The gloom was still on him when in February he wrote a reply to a letter from Clarinda, in which he speaks of incessant headache, depressing spirits, a deranged nervous system, hints at grievous error and imprudence on his own part, and ends with a song—"Lovely Nancy!" He came in now and then to Dumfries to attend the theatre. And we soon find him in Johnson's "Museum" pouring out some of his most exquisite ditties—"Tam Glen," "Bonnie Ann" (addressed to Annie Masterton, a daughter of his friend Allan Masterton), and "My Heart 's in the Highlands." The third volume of this Miscellany was now published with a characteristic preface by Burns.

A heresy-hunt was instituted by some nameless bigots of the day against a man, Heron of Kirkgunzeon, equally unknown till he signalized himself by binding down

a man that was to be ordained to the Confession of Faith, "so far as it was agreeable to reason and the word of God." This raised Burns' wrath, who calls it a farce got up by the clergy; but he did not think it worth while to express his feelings about it in rhyme. He wrote instead such trifles as Elegy "On the Death of Peg Nicholson," a mare—called after the attempted assassin of George III.—which Willie Nicol had given Burns; and some clever verses addressed to a gentleman who had presented him with a newspaper, and offered to continue it free of expense, in which occur glimpses of rare sagacity and felicitous expression, such as—

> "And how the collieshangie works
> Between the Russians and the Turks;"
> "If Denmark, ony body spak o't;"
> "If sleekit Chatham Will was leevin,
> Or glaikit Charley got his nieve in;
> How Daddie Burke the plea was cookin';
> If Warren Hastings' neck be yeukin'."

What admirable discrimination in these words—"Sleekit Chatham Will," more rogue than fool; "Glaikit Charley," careless, rollicking Charles James Fox; "Daddie Burke," prudent, profound, fatherly, as well as all-learned and all-brilliant, Edmund Burke. Burns saw men at a glance, and the glance was followed up like lightning by the single, searching, thunder word. This made him potentially as great a critic as a poet—a Hazlitt as well as a Byron. This insight he carried into his estimate of his species, of character, and of life. "Mankind," he says, "are by nature benevolent creatures, except in a few scoundrelly cases. I do not know that avarice of the good things we chance to have is born with us; but we are placed here amid such nakedness, hunger, and poverty and want, that we are under a cursed necessity of studying selfishness in order that we may exist. Still there are in every age a few souls that all the wants and woes of life cannot debase to selfishness, or even to the necessary alloy of caution and prudence. If I ever am in danger of vanity, it is when I contemplate myself on this side of my disposition and character. God knows I am no saint. I have a whole host of sins and follies to answer for; but if I could—and I believe I do it as far as I can—I would wipe away all tears from all eyes. Even the knaves who have injured me, I would oblige them; though, to tell the truth, it would be more out of vengeance, and to show that I was independent of and above them, than out of the overflowings of my benevolence."

Passing over some electioneering ballad writing, a thing Burns always does well, although it is seldom worth doing, we meet with a piece of real poetry, written about a man of whom hardly anything is known except that he was a jolly companion—one who loved his friend and his bottle—Matthew Henderson, Esq. On his unknown grave and obscure name Burns lavishes roses and *immortelles* in a very shower, one would say, of wasted feeling and beauty, were not the beauty so rich, and the feeling, though a little exaggerated in expression, so sincere. It might have been an elegy for Fox or Mirabeau, the idol of a nation, instead of for Matthew Henderson, the idol of Fortune's tavern. How powerful the genius which could almost match Lycidas in commemoration of a kindly *bon vivant*, to whom Burns bore probably the relation of "Tam o' Shanter" to "Souter Johnny!"—

> "Tam lo'ed him like a vera brither."

We get from various quarters accounts how matters were going on in Ellisland this year (1790). They are somewhat contradictory, and it is difficult to strike an average. Some find nothing but extravagance on the part of the servants, and carelessness on that of the masters—"the lasses constantly employed in baking scones, and the lads eating them warm with ale." Others speak of Mrs. Burns as a prudent manager. One, William Clarke, who was a ploughman to Burns for six months, gives his master a good character on the whole—as hasty, but kindly; often from home, but attending pretty well to his farm when at home; never once intoxicated to Clarke's knowledge, or unable to attend to business; once terribly angry when he saw a servant woman nearly choking one of the cows by not cutting the potatoes small enough; not flush of liquor to servants, as other masters Clarke had known, though he sometimes gave them a dram for extra work; and the following, at least, was pretty certainly correct:—Usually dressed in a broad blue bonnet, a drab or blue long-tailed coat, corduroy breeches, dark blue stockings and cuitikins (short leggins), and with a "maud" on his shoulders when it was cold—just the Scottish farmer of the period, *cap-à-piê*.

We quote the descriptions of visits paid to him by Ramsay of Ochtertyre and Sir Egerton Brydges, the last of which especially is full of true, fresh enthusiasm:—

"Seeing him pass quickly near Closeburn, I said to my companion, 'That is Burns.' On coming to the inn, the ostler told us he would be back in a few minutes to grant permits; that where he met with anything seizable, he was no better than any other gauger; in everything else that he was perfectly a gentleman. After leaving a note to be delivered to him on his return, I proceeded to his house, being curious to see his Jean, &c. I was much pleased with his *uxor Sabina qualis*, and the poet's modest mansion, so unlike the habitation of ordinary rustics. In the evening he suddenly bounced in upon us, and said, as he entered, 'I come, to use the words of Shakspeare, "stewed in haste."' In fact, he had ridden incredibly fast after receiving my note. We fell into conversation directly, and soon got into the *mare magnum*

of poetry. He told me that he had now gotten a story for a drama, which he was to call 'Rob Macquechan's Elshon,' from a popular story of Robert Bruce being defeated on the Water of Cairn, when the heel of his boot having loosened in his flight, he applied to Robert Macquechan to fit it, who, to make sure, ran his awl nine inches up the king's heel. We were now going on at a great rate, when Mr. S[tewart] popped in his head, which put a stop to our discourse, which had become very interesting. Yet in a little while it was resumed; and such was the force and versatility of the bard's genius, that he made the tears run down Mr. S[tewart]'s cheeks, albeit unused to the poetic strain. . . . From that time we met no more, and I was grieved at the reports of him afterwards. Poor Burns! we shall hardly ever see his like again. He was, in truth, a sort of comet in literature, irregular in its motions, which did not do good proportioned to the blaze of light it displayed."

Thus speaks Sir E. Brydges:—"I had always been a great admirer of his genius and of many traits in his character; and I was aware that he was a person moody and somewhat difficult to deal with. I was resolved to keep in full consideration the irritability of his position in society. About a mile from his residence, on a bench under a tree, I passed a figure, which from the engraved portraits of him I did not doubt was the poet; but I did not venture to address him. On arriving at his humble cottage, Mrs. Burns opened the door; she was the plain sort of humble woman she has been described. She ushered me into a neat apartment, and said that she would send for Burns, who was gone for a walk. In about half an hour he came, and my conjecture proved right—he was the person I had seen on the bench by the road-side. At first I was not entirely pleased with his countenance. I thought it had a sort of capricious jealousy, as if he was half inclined to treat me as an intruder. I resolved to bear it, and try if I could humour him. I let him choose his turn of conversation, and said a few words about the friend whose letter I had brought to him. It was now about four in the afternoon of an autumn day. While we were talking, Mrs. Burns, as if accustomed to entertain visitors in this way, brought in a bottle of Scotch whisky, and set the table. I accepted this hospitality. I could not help observing the curious glance with which he watched me at the entrance of this signal of homely entertainment. He was satisfied. He filled our glasses: 'Here's a health to auld Caledonia!' The fire sparkled in his eye, and mine sympathetically met his. He shook my hand with warmth, and we were friends at once. Then he drank 'Erin for ever!' and the tear of delight burst from his eye. The fountain of his mind and his heart now opened at once, and flowed with abundant force almost till midnight.

"He had amazing acuteness of intellect as well as glow of sentiment. I do not deny that he said some absurd things, and many coarse ones, and that his knowledge was very irregular, and sometimes too presumptuous, and that he did not endure contradiction with sufficient patience. His pride, and perhaps his vanity, was even morbid. I carefully avoided topics in which he could not take an active part. Of literary gossip he knew nothing, and therefore I kept aloof from it; in the technical parts of literature his opinions were crude and uninformed; but whenever he spoke of a great writer whom he had read, his taste was generally sound. To a few minor writers he gave more credit than they deserved. His great beauty was his manly strength, and his energy and elevation of thought and feeling. He had always a full mind, and all flowed from a genuine spring. I never conversed with a man who appeared to be more warmly impressed with the beauties of nature; and visions of female beauty and tenderness seemed to transport him. He did not merely appear to be a poet at casual intervals; but at every moment a poetical enthusiasm seemed to beat in his veins, and he lived all his days the inward if not the outward life of a poet. I thought I perceived in Burns' cheek the symptoms of an energy which had been pushed too far, and he had this feeling himself. Every now and then he spoke of the grave as soon about to close over him. His dark eye had at first a character of sternness; but as he became warmed, though this did not entirely melt away, it was mingled with changes of extreme softness."

He began to be now flattered by Mr. Graham with the hope of a supervisorship. This would have brought him in £200 a-year (a sum about equal to £400 now), although attended by great drudgery; and in this case we should have heard less of the ruin and poverty of Burns. But even this beggarly promise of a Boreal morn never came to day. Dr. James Anderson (not to be confounded with Dr. Robert Anderson, editor of the "British Poets," and an early friend of Thomas Campbell), editor of a periodical called "*The Bee*," asked Burns through Blacklock to contribute to it. Blacklock did this in a rhymed epistle, and Burns hurled back his *No* in a torrent of honest execration, not at Blacklock, but at his own business, "the friction of holding the noses of the publicans to the grindstone of *the Excise*."

At this time his brother William died in London, and Robert paid the expenses of his illness and funeral. Robert Ainslie visited him on the 15th of October, and found the *kirn* of the year going on; and found, besides Burns and his wife, a sister of Burns, and a sister of Mrs. Burns, three male and female cousins, and some neighbours who had been harvesting. Ainslie describes it as a humble enough affair, although he enjoyed in the evening, *more suo*, dancing and kissing the lasses at the end of each

dance. He thought Burns happy in a situation which yet he was preparing to leave, and of which he gave Ainslie some rather disagreeable particulars. He wrote this for the benefit of Clarinda, who eagerly swallowed all she heard of her lover, although the hope of his ever being hers did not now, we presume, visit her wildest dreams.

Having talked with Grose about Alloway Kirk, the poet had told him to make a drawing of it, because it was the burying-ground of his father, and was believed to be haunted by ghosts and witches; and Grose had promised to print a weird story for him in his book if he would write it. And hence came the immortal tale of "Tam o' Shanter." The circumstances are familiar to everybody—the poet spending a day in autumn (always his inspired season, even, as Thomson says, "inspiring autumn comes!") by the banks of the Nith; approached at evening by his wife and her two weans; her stopping back, however, as she sees he is crooning to himself in one of his poetic moods, and cowering along with her two little boys in the broom while waiting for him; his reappearance in a state of half-frenzied excitement, in what Burke would call an "agony of glory," with the big tears falling over his cheeks, and reciting to himself

"Now, Tam! ah, Tam! had thae been queans,"

and so on. We can never reconcile this ravished hour of triumphant genius with the picture MacDiarmid adds of the poet writing down his verses on a sod-dyke, although we have little doubt that the second part of the statement is true, that he repeated them at his fireside with great glee; but we fancy they were transcribed in the house, probably after recitation. Not a few such rapid improvisations of first-rate poetry or prose are found in literary history. There are many passages which appear to heave and hurry on with a celerity and totality of motion that suggest the idea of inspiration or abandonment—seem as if they were copied out from some fiery scroll unfolded suddenly before the Man of Genius by an invisible hand ere it has vanished away. Such passages we find in Milton, notably in the "Areopagitica;" in many of Jeremy Taylor's glowing and gushing similitudes ("So have I seen"); in some of the grand swells of Burke's "Regicide Peace," and "Letter to a Member of the National Assembly;" in Curran and Grattan *passim;* not unfrequently even in Charles Phillips; in some of the high-wrought climaxes of Chalmers and Irving, where the effort indeed rather overwhelms the ease, and the power is born in pain and labour; in the splendid peroration of Hall's "Sermon on the Present Crisis;" in many parts of Wilson's "Tales" and "Noctes;" in a few of Carlyle's and Ruskin's descriptions; and in De Quincey's "Suspiria de Profundis," especially his transcendent "Ladies of Sorrow." These are all in prose; but there are many in verse, too, such as the close of Milton's sixth book of "Paradise Lost;" much of "Lear," "Macbeth," and "Timon of Athens;" Christopher Smart's marvellous "David;" a poem or two of Crashaw's; Coleridge's "Ode to France;" Shelley's "Cloud," and the first canto of the "Revolt of Islam;" Wordsworth's "Ode to Sound" (a little too elaborate); Wilson's "Address to a Wild Deer;" Byron's fourth canto of "Childe Harold" throughout, and some portions of "Don Juan;" Campbell's "O'Connor's Child;" Smith's "Barbara" and "Garden and Child;" Keats' "Nightingale" and "Hyperion;" Mrs. Browning's "Lady Geraldine's Courtship;" the close of Aird's "Devil's Dream;" Dobell's "Chamouni," and some parts of his "Roman;" Bailey's description of himself as a student in "Festus," and many others. Here all differ from Tam o' Shanter, and differ from each other in many points, but agree in the wonderful manner in which they are all not sought, sent for, or sweltered out, or pumped up, or forced down, but come spontaneously in and from the poetic soul—as if brought at one time on the pen of the lightning writing on a black sky, and compelling the poet to write as fast and furiously below, and as if breathed at another from the silent and holy midnight more calmly and slowly into the lowly and listening ear, in which way it was that the soul of Wordsworth received the serenest and deepest of his inspirations! Campbell, in his "O'Connor's Child," describes his high-wrought heroine, in accounting for the frenzy which made her utter the *malison* of heaven against her cruel brothers' rage, that she durst not

"Have spoke
The curse which severed Nature's yoke,
But that a *Spirit* o'er her stood."

It were difficult to settle to what order the Spirit which inspired "Tam o' Shanter" belonged. "Puck" might have given the light raillery of the opening part; "Ariel," though of a loftier mood, was hardly competent to the deep and terrible imagination found in the elements on the "haly table." The Spirit assuredly was a "Proteus," by whatever other names it might be known in heaven, earth, or hell; and was like "Puck" in this respect, that as he

"Put a girdle round about the globe
In forty minutes,

so the Genius of the Hour in "Tam o' Shanter" ranges with incredible speed and ease, in the very twinkling of an eye, "from gay to grave, from lively to severe"; and in some two hundred and thirty lines includes every species nearly of literary excellence—the humorous, the picturesque, the sententious, the grotesque, the sublime, the playful, the horrible and awful, all expressed in the most terse and felicitous language—every word a thing, every line a picture; and while the unity of the whole might be the despair of Art, it is felt to be the mere unconscious

result of Nature. Shakspearean, it has been called; but we question if Shakspeare has any where so much that is Shakspearean lying in the same compass: it is Shakspeare in shorthand. The "haly table," though the most powerful, is not the most perfect part of the poem; but in it here and there you feel as if the wild wing of the inspiration flagged.

Grose printed "Tam o' Shanter" in April, 1791, calling it a "pretty tale!"* but died in Dublin almost immediately after its publication. Moore praised it languidly; Tytler gives it a far more generous encomium. Burns felt, as poets often do correctly, that he had produced his masterpiece. The Ayrshire people found time, after having their long laugh out, to identify the characters—"Tam" with Douglas Graham of Shanter farm, between Turnberry and Colzean; "Kate" with his wife, Helen MacTaggart, much given to superstition; and "Souter Johnny" with a crony called John Davidson, a tanner, who believed there was nothing like leather except whisky.

After a long symposium in the town of Ayr on a tempestuous night, Graham, riding home, lost his bonnet near the Brigg of Doon, which contained all the money he had made at the market. Afraid of a scold, he invented and told Helen some cock-and-bull story about being frightened by witches near Alloway Kirk; but nevertheless returned to the place in search of his bonnet, which he found, along with his money, in a plantation. Burns knew this couple when at Kirkoswald, in the churchyard of which the reader may see an inscription recording the memory of "Tam" as a very religious man, who was not, after all, "drooned in Doon" or caught by demons, but died in the odour of sanctity, if not with the reputation of eminent sobriety. In March of this year a posthumous child was born to Mrs. Henri, a daughter of Mrs. Dunlop, married to a Frenchman, who had died; and this event delighted our poet, and awakened his muse. "This pledge o' meikle love" removed while very young to France. Mrs. Henri died, and the paternal grandfather had to flee from the French Revolution to Switzerland, where the boy was brought up by a Mademoiselle Susette, a domestic, who was the means of preserving for him the family estates.

In due course came 1794; and we find Burns writing a stern Hymn to Poverty, still his close companion and cold mistress, in the shape of a letter to Peter Hill, inclosing a part payment of an account for books. Chambers gives a list of the books, and says, "It thus appears that Burns loved Smollett, Fielding, the English dramatists, and books of liberal divinity." One is amused to find amongst these liberal books the "Marrow of Modern Divinity," Cole on "God's Sovereignty," Newton's "Letters," and the "Confession of Faith"—books of the very highest Calvinistic type, and which might have filled very creditably a shelf in the library of "Daddie Auld" or Mr. Kirkpatrick. We wonder if Burns left any notes or queries upon their margins. In John Newton he would have found some sentimental matter, transfiguring his own amorous feelings—John Newton being a converted Burns. But old Elisha Cole must have been a chokepear; and the statements of the "Confession" as to elect infants and reprobation would find a feeble echo in the warm and all-embracing charity of Burns' heart.

Poor Miss Burnet, his Edinburgh idol—an idol he had seen for a long time now at a distance, and dared not approach—died; and Burns, as he truly says, "hammered at" a poor poem about her. His real poem was the sentence already quoted when he first saw her; and he did not, nor perhaps could, write on her what Coleridge did not very long afterwards on a kindred spirit called prematurely home :—

> "They surely have no need of you
> In the place where you are going;
> Earth hath its angels all too few,
> While heaven is overflowing."

Some people write best on Nature in winter—memory and absence bringing out its beauties then more forcibly, along with a certain pathetic feeling, like the sweet, soft tone which a slight illness gives to the heart, not felt in robust health. Perhaps it is on this principle that Burns' letter to Dr. Alison on Association and his "Lament of Mary Queen of Scots"—both written in February—are so exquisitely beautiful. But it would be difficult to conceive Burns writing poorly on Mary or on Beauty. Still this was, after all, a fictitious woe; but the death of Lord Glencairn, Burns' kindest and truest patron, was real sorrow. That admirable nobleman died at Falmouth on his way home from Lisbon, where he had gone in a vain search for health. Burns was deeply grieved, named in a year or so a son after him, and wrote the touching lament—

> "I'll remember thee, Glencairn,
> And a' that thou hast done for me."

He even meant to cross the country, had he known the day of the funeral, to drop a tear at his benefactor's grave. Few poets have ever had such a patron, and certainly no patron in Scotland had ever such a poet—not merely in genius, but in gratitude. It seemed a year of misfortune. Soon after Lord Glencairn's death Burns fell and broke his right arm; and may it not be ranked as a third calamity that Janet Little, a poetical milkmaid, came to visit him? Such humble contemporaries, however, he seems to have treated in a kind and considerate manner. This was in March. In April Mrs. Burns presented him

* Grose, it is to be hoped, was a better soldier and antiquary than a critic.

with a son, and he, probably in accordance with an old promise, gave the name to his irascible, but hearty and learned friend, Willie Nicol. He soon after, though his broken arm was healed, bruised his leg, and to crown all, he determined to leave Ellisland. And it was amidst this complication of disagreeables that he wrote his third Epistle to Mr. Graham of Fintry, a clever copy of verses, sententious, laborious, querulous, but neither plaintive nor powerful.

A letter he wrote to his friend Cunningham of Edinburgh in defence of a schoolmaster at Moffat, one Clarke, (of whom afterwards), who was accused of inhumanity to his boys, is savagely strong in its expressions, and points, according to Chambers, to a begun exacerbation in his tone of feeling. But we find many similar outbursts in his letters before he came to Dumfriesshire at all. Still there runs through all his Ellisland correspondence a certain current of bitterness and disappointment which it is not difficult to understand. He was not keeping his farm, and hence his farm was not keeping him. He was not the better, but the worse, of having two strings to his bow. The exciseman and the farmer were perpetually jostling. There is no evidence that his irregularities were getting habitually worse; but he was greatly exposed to company, and was professionally and otherwise often in inns. He seems, too, as his friend Ainslie noticed, to be now often among the great, and that not on equal or anything like equal terms; but was sometimes at their feasts, brought in to amuse them, and his noble genius was degraded into a menial at their tables. This, on reflection, must have made his proud spirit very miserable. It could not be pleasant to awaken at once with a burning head and a sense of degradation, equally ardent. His best patron, Glencairn, was dead. His poems were going into new editions, for which he was rewarded by a few extra copies by the sly, stingy Creech. Chambers speaks of a system of severe criticism being directed to his writings, which he could not brook. This is a common case with authors at a certain stage of their progress. If the first book of a writer has been a great success, the second is usually thought a failure. It appears amid a greater glare of notice and expectation. It is uniformly, if unreasonably, expected to be a vast stride ahead of its predecessor; and if not, the disappointment is commensurate. If, on the other hand, the author is for a long time silent, it is said that his vein is exhausted—"We have got all that 's in him." Then whatever faults are known to exist in the man, are made makeweights against the merits of the poet or author. We know that at one time of Byron's life he was so disgusted by this kind of treatment that he threatened to quit the arena altogether, to burn all his works and write no more, and was with difficulty dissuaded by his friends. Burns for a year or two had written little, and that not his best, and his enemies exclaimed, "He is a waning star, we thought him too bright to last;" and the common, though then exaggerated, rumour of his habits strengthened this spirit of depreciation. No doubt "Tam o' Shanter" came as a blow in the face of such judges, exhibiting, as it did, all his powers as bright as ever, and blended into one glorious focus—incomparably the best of his productions, in point both of art and of genius. But that masterpiece was for a good while little known; and even it did not escape the down-taking process of Dr. Moore, and perhaps of others, of whom Burns was aware, though we are not. At all events, how eagerly he grasps at the praise of Tytler and other generous critics on his favourite "Tam!" We believe he was inclined, like Byron, to give up writing, and would have done so, all but his songs; but they came from his heart, and that could not be shut. It produced an irresistible outflow. He could as well cease to breathe as to pour forth the passions of his bosom and the sentiments of his soul in song. We sometimes think that either now or a year afterwards Burns, as he was urged to do, should have issued a second volume of poems, with "Tam o' Shanter" in the van. If smaller than his first, it would still have been of great merit, would have become very popular, shown the public that he was still Burns, the unequalled poet of Scotland, and its success would have cheered, perhaps bettered him.

He had resolved now to leave Ellisland in December. The place was getting gradually hateful to him. It was sown with the salt of lost time and money. It was haunted by not a few saddening and humiliating memories. The Nith had not the music in his ear it had three years before, and every murmur of its waters seemed to say, "Let us go hence." But ere he left the farm for ever, some little adventures relieved the monotony of his life, if they did not increase its happiness. Two English gentlemen—"Pilgrims of his Genius"—came to see him; found him angling in the river with a huge foxskin cap on his head, a greatcoat fastened round him by a belt, from which depended an enormous broadsword; made a night of it with him; went away maudlin; and left him miserable. This story Carlyle doubts, but it is very like Burns in one of his vagaries and reckless moods. There was now and then a dash of affected oddity about him. He had got the notion (as Thomas Aird always insisted, and Jeffrey hints at it, too, in his Review) from the lives of the English dramatists and poets of Charles II. and of Queen Anne, that oddity and wildness were essential to a wit. In the same spirit he inscribed on the collar of his dog, "Robert Burns, Poet." But this spice of absurdity bore no more proportion to his wisdom and genius than Falstaff's bread did to his sack; and would to God, he had had no greater sins for which to answer! The Earl

of Buchan invited him to perpetrate a greater folly still, by walking across the country in harvest time and down the Tweed to assist at the crowning of the bust of Thomson at his native Ednam. Burns, however, refused, and sent a copy of middling verses instead. A bright, transient ray now shone on him in the shape of a lively young English-woman—the first English lady that seems ever to have made any impression on his susceptible bosom, so slender had hitherto been his opportunities of making the acquaintance of England's graceful daughters—one Deborah Davies, who was on a visit to the Riddells. She was of small stature, but very handsome. Her lot was unfortunate—to be jilted by a Captain Delany, and afterwards to droop and die.

He now, too, made acquaintance with Mr. Charles Sharpe of Hoddam, an exquisite musician and player on the violin; and a correspondence took place between them, which has been lost. At the roup of his last crop a scene of debauchery took place, which we leave Burns to describe himself in his letters. Roups and sales in Scotland at this time, as Sir Walter notices in his "Guy Mannering," were often very riotous scenes, owing to the free circulation of whisky. To Mr. Maxwell of Terraughty, a leading man in Dumfriesshire, he wrote some verses. Maxwell was descended in the fifth degree from Lord Herries, Queen Mary's friend, honourably mentioned in "The Abbot," and died so late as 1814. Is it not rather curious that Burns' last song composed at Ellisland was his "Song of Death?" a powerful, but surely a most gloomy production; no shout from the wounded and the dying in a patriotic and triumphant army—"O, Death, where is thy victory?"—but a mock-heroic challenge, sinking into a hollow groan of empty defiance. It is death without the faintest gleam of prospect beyond.

He left Ellisland without much regret, for it had long been a losing concern, and but for his Excise income would have ruined him. He got no supervisorship; but it was arranged that he would perform duty at Dumfries as a common exciseman for £70 a year, an increase on his salary of £20. And as he kept now no horse, and still expected to rise in his profession, it was thought a change for the better. Miller at the time when Burns parted from Ellisland sold it to a Mr. Morine, and some time in November Burns and his family removed to Dumfries.

We saw Ellisland in December, 1877, for the third time, we think, on a fine morning, on our way from Dunscore to Dumfries, with the beautiful winter light, so spiritual in its clearness, shining on the distant hills to the west; while the sky was crossed by a rainbow, broken and invisible in the centre, but with its two arms exceedingly brilliant—one of them resting on the barn-yard where Burns passed his hour of love agony. It seemed very significant of his tearful, bright, and fragmentary existence. Farther down we got a glimpse of Dalswinton, with its skeleton woods, and of the Isle, Friars' Carse, and the miserable erection which has now taken the place of the Hermitage we had left behind. It was market day, and a multitude of peasants were trudging into Dumfries, much as it probably was in 1791. But one was wanting—the bright-eyed, swarthy poet, walking beside the cart containing his furniture, on which are exalted his wife and children, who seems, as he now fixes his dark gaze on the approaching town, and anon reverts it to the receding farm, with all its sere woods and dismal recollections, to mutter to himself, not as of yore—

> "As I gaed up by Glenap,
> I met an aged woman,
> Who bade me keep up my heart,
> For the best o' my days were coming;"

but,

> "Och, I backward cast my e'e
> On prospects drear;
> And forward, though I canna see,
> I guess and fear."

CHAPTER XII.

BURNS IN DUMFRIES—HIS DEATH.

THIS chapter is to be a long one, for we cannot tell where logically to break it in two. Burns has got now on the inclined plane leading down to the grave. Either before or immediately after his removal to Dumfries he had paid a visit to Edinburgh, and had one more interview with Clarinda. She had been occasionally corresponding with him, and had been gradually reconciled to the belief that they were never to be one. Her anger at his marriage had subsided, and she wished to see him once more before going to join her husband in Jamaica. We suspect that Burns did not care much for this; that his feelings for her were not so strong as hers for him; and that he felt that an interview would be extremely embarrassing and painful—how much so we cannot tell, unless we knew the exact terms on which the two lived and loved together. But he could not deny her request, and they met accordingly on the 6th day of December, 1791. Perhaps the taste is a little prurient which would like to know the particulars of the interview. Let us say, as Byron of Numa and Egeria—

> "The purple midnight veiled that mystic meeting
> With her most starry canopy, and seating
> Thyself by thy adorer—what befell?"

Grant it a scene of perfect purity, and even delicacy—there would be passionate words, perhaps bitter recriminations, burning tears, and "again and again reverberated, everlasting farewells." Jamie in "Auld Robin Gray," and his lover, took but "ae" kiss, and then separated for ever. Burns and Clarinda probably took more, but there came a last one—

> "Ae fond kiss, and then we sever."

Burns vented his chagrin, or whatever his feeling was, in lyric after lyric, each more beautiful and passionate than another, and they became a safety valve. Clarinda's feelings were deeper and more silent. On January 25, 1792 (Burns' thirty-third birthday), she wrote him her last letter bidding him farewell in anticipation of her immediate voyage. It has the *religiosity* which characterized her; perhaps we might use a better, perhaps a worse name:—"Seek God's favour; keep his commandments; be solicitous to prepare for a happy eternity. Then I trust we will meet in never-ending bliss." She did not sail till February, and, curiously enough, she set out in that very *Roselle* in which Burns intended to have sailed for Jamaica five years before. It was doomed to bear in it for once, and very nearly twice, the cargo of a broken and miserable heart.

Burns had no time to spend in idle lamentations, nor do we think his inward wound was so deep as in the case of Mary Campbell. He soon plunged into other pleasures in addition to the cares of his calling. He got acquainted with Maria Riddell, and, as usual, there was a mutual fascination, which never went any farther, but in a while withered into an estrangement. Maria Woodley was the daughter of the Governor-general of Berbice, and had married Walter Riddell, younger brother of Glenriddell, who had come home lately from Antigua, where he had an estate. They settled at a place called The Holm (once the seat of Andrew Crosbie, better known as "Counsellor Pleydell," in "Guy Mannering"), four miles south of Dumfries, which Mr. Riddell named Woodley Park, after his wife. She was a highly accomplished and very clever woman, perhaps the most accomplished lady Burns had ever met—a lover of poetry, herself a poet, and extremely fond of books and of literary society. She was very young—only eighteen; already a mother; and like most natives of her burning clime, ardent, susceptible, and not a little capricious. Burns knew her through the Riddells of Friars' Carse, and became soon a frequent visitor of Woodley Park, and, as usual, imagined himself in love with the lady of the house, who treated him with great distinction, and often called at his dwelling. As she had a book preparing for the press on the "Natural History of Madeira and the Leeward Islands," she consulted Burns, who sent her, with a letter of introduction to his old friend Smellie, like a gazelle into the den of a bear. He received her, however, very graciously. About this time Burns paid an account he had owed for two years to Robert Burn, architect, of £5 10s., for erecting a monument to Robert Fergusson. Burn, who was all but the poet's namesake, had some of his wit; for he returned

the account, adding, "I will be happy to receive orders of a like nature for as many more of your friends that have gone hence as you please!"

Burns' first house was in the Wee Vennel, as it was called, now Bank Street. It is the first flat of a two-storied house, and consists now of two rooms inhabited by different families — the one having been, we are told, Burns' study, while the other is much larger, and might have formed a very respectable parlour or dining-room in those days. It originally consisted, we think, of three apartments—study, bedroom, and parlour. On the ground floor in Burns' day was John Syme's office for the distribution of stamps, where now our worthy friend Mr. Hamilton, corn merchant, has his business room. There does not seem to be much alteration either in the approach or the interior; and we said to ourselves as our friend and we climbed up the stair, how often has Burns done this, and how interesting such a commonplace sound as we are making must have been in the ear of Jean, wearying for the return of her lord, and saying, when it was at last heard—

"His very foot has music in 't
As he comes up the stair!"

We pass now to a curious incident, which has much exercised the biographers of Burns. A superintendent, a kind of "Frank Kennedy," was stationed in Annan to watch the smuggling trade, then carried on with great activity along the Galloway coast. Burns was one of the party employed to watch a suspicious-looking brig which appeared in the Solway Frith. As it seemed too strong and well-armed to be attacked rashly, Lewars, a brother exciseman, went off for a party of dragoons to Dumfries. Burns and his companions waited impatiently for their return, and one of them expressed a wish that the Devil had Lewars for his slowness in returning, and that Burns might indite a song on the laggard. Burns said nothing, but after a few strides along the wet marsh, came back roaring out the clever ditty, "The Deil 's awa' wi' the Exciseman." By-and-bye Lewars arrived with his troop, the brig was boarded, Burns being the first man; and the next day, when the vessel was sold in Dumfries, he purchased four carronades (at £3) and presented them to the French Legislative Assembly—not the Convention, as Lockhart says, which had not then existence. We were still at peace with France, although possibly, ere these carronades reached, war might have begun. It was a fine erratic impulse on the part of the poet, and showed with what evident sympathy he was watching the rising of the Day-Star of Liberty, soon to be quenched in darkness and in blood. He had arrived at the first stage of sympathy with the French Revolution, which almost all the poetic souls and liberal politicians of the period reached—Coleridge, Southey, Wordsworth, Godwin, Cowper, Mackintosh, Fox, Hazlitt, Canning—all except Burke, whose prophetic eye saw the red flower of massacre and anarchy within the white and beautiful bud which concealed it, and

"Heard the thunder ere the tempest lowered!"

Significant that all these except Fox, Godwin, and Hazlitt, turned more or less against this "Grand Phenomenon," which they had so warmly admired and so eloquently praised! Burns is hardly a case in point, and his conversion to Conservatism was not that of his whole heart.

Our poet at first seems rather to have liked Dumfries. He had more there to divert him from his own sad thoughts. An evening walk by the Nith did not always soothe him to peace. The theatre or a night at the Globe always seemed to do, and he had no time the next morning, as at Ellisland, to nurse his headache or indulge his remorse. Another vision of beauty and grace transported him (Miss Lesley Baillie, afterwards Mrs. Cumming of Logie, who died in 1843), recalled the perished days of Margaret Chalmers and Charlotte Hamilton; and he accompanied her, though he could ill spare time, thirteen miles on her southward journey, dined with her, and made a ballad on her as he returned.

George Thomson of Edinburgh having, along with a company of musical amateurs, projected a collection of Scottish airs and tunes on a new and *recherché* scale, asked the aid of Burns, which was enthusiastically rendered; Burns stipulating for no fee or reward, and not even expecting at first what was to be the richest of all his rewards—the privilege of setting the heart of the Scottish nation to everlasting song, and doing for Scottish feeling what he had done for Scottish manners, customs, and religious rites.

In August this year came out, along with the heather blooms, the fourth volume of "Johnson's Musical Museum," which Thomson's book was to eclipse, but in which appeared some of Burns' most charming songs—"Craigie Burn Wood," "Oh meikle thinks my love o' my beauty," the "Banks o' Doon," "Flow gently, sweet Afton," and perhaps best of all, that dainty and delicious strain—

"O luve will venture in where it daurna weel be seen,
O luve will venture in where wisdom ance has been;
But I will down yon river rove, amang the woods sae green,
And a' to pu' a posie to my ain dear May."

On the 21st of August, 1792, Mrs. Burns had a daughter, who was named Elizabeth Riddell, in honour of the laird of Friars' Carse, and was not destined to a long life. Chambers speaks with a kind of surprise of Burns' being seen in the summer gloamings dandling his little daughter in his arms, and singing to her. One minds the story of the poor negro who, when he heard of God sending His

Son to redeem the world, cried, "It be just like Him." So this little anecdote "be just like" Burns, the most affectionate of fathers. Smellie and Maria Riddell had become great friends. He praised and patronized her volume; and she got the great eccentric naturalist to visit Dumfries, where he figured as a most extraordinary "lion"—attended assemblies, and was, along with Burns, entertained by the magistrates. Bozzy was not a prouder man when he brought Dr. Johnson and Jack Wilkes together, than was Mrs. Riddell when she accomplished a reunion between such a pair as Burns and Smellie; although as Bozzy received sundry knocks from both his friends as a reward for going between them, so Mrs. Riddell got one coarse compliment, at least, from Smellie, which we would rather not transfer from Chambers' page to our own. It was characteristic of the times, and of the rude "Orson" who uttered it; but not, we trust, applicable to the lady. Chambers says that in those days a woman even of refinement had to stand a great deal from her male friends. But unlike Smellie, Burns, unless when intoxicated, was incapable, we think, of insulting a lady like Maria Riddell.

And now commenced that correspondence with Thomson which, with the delightful lyrics sprinkled through it, and the comments from the pen of Burns, forms such a pleasant portion of his writings. How charming, at the turning of every page, to come upon those old familiar faces of song —"Highland Mary," the "Lea Rig," "Duncan Gray," and "Auld Rob Morris." He found time, too, to write some trifles upon Miss Fontenelle, a *petite* actress of the day on the Dumfries stage, such as the "Rights of Woman," "An Address," &c.

Burns had at this time fallen into a grave error. A young woman, residing with her sister, Mrs. Hyslop of the Globe Tavern, bore him a daughter. Some suppose that it was while Mrs. Burns was in Ayrshire visiting her friends that this unhappy affair occurred. Everybody remembers that Jean took home the child, laid her in a cradle beside her own infant, and when her father, who visited her, asked in astonishment if she again had twins, answered "It's a neebor's bairn who is unwell," and brought up the child as her own. The child's name was Elizabeth, as that of all the three daughters of Burns was. She became a Mrs. Thomson, of Pollokshaws, and bore a striking resemblance to her father. People will judge of Burns and Jean in this matter according to their own temperament and habits of thinking. Burns' conduct may be palliated, but cannot be defended; he would not have defended it himself, and many will deem the palliations pled from his passions, his habits, and his wife's absence, very poor ones. Let us simply say, "None else is judge but God!" But Jean's conduct, in our idea, rises to the sublime. She acted to the child in the cradle, to her husband, and to the guilty mother in the very spirit of Jesus Christ. And how her conduct led, undesignedly, to deeper retribution! Burns suffered severely in his own conscience, but it was Jean's action which barbed the arrow that pierced his vitals. How could he sleep while she was in unmurmuring silence rocking the cradle of that child of sin?

Robert Chambers says, in allusion to Burns' feelings of remorse and misery, "Is there really in the world anything greatly to discompose a man besides the Promethean vulture of a sense of his own errors?" This may to some extent, though not entirely, solve the mystery of Burns' misery, but not that of thousands of other men. Surely Chambers has forgotten the names of Pascal, Johnson, Foster, Carlyle, among philosophers; Young and Cowper among poets; Robert Hall, at one period of his life, among preachers; the whole martyrology of the world; Paul exclaiming, "O wretched man that I am;" and innumerable more names recorded in history of men and women of spotless life and noble character who have been unhappy. One name occurs to us—mentioned in Thomas Erskine of Linlathen's "Memoirs"—Madame de Broglie, daughter of the great Madame de Stael, a lady of virtue, parts, easy circumstances, fortunate family relationships, and yet weighed down by constant melancholy, desiring to die, and glad exceedingly when she had found the grave. Errors in life are common; but while they spread down for some men a Promethean pillow of thorns, on many, perhaps on more, they have little effect. A more sensible question has been asked, "Who is happy?" although many try to believe they are so who are most miserable in spirit. How many shrink back from looking into their own hearts, as men used to shrink from looking into a mirror when alone, afraid that they might see there, instead of their own face, that of a fiend, or worse still, that of the image of themselves as they were in innocent childhood or happy youth, now gone for ever!

Burns certainly was not happy at this time, and seems to have often (what a sad and suggestive expression!) forgot himself! He was a good deal exposed to temptation. Dumfries was then a small, social, hearty town—a town like those so graphically described by Christopher North:—"The whole town tipples; there are club-rooms in every lane; the flow of ale is perpetual, perpetual the puffing of pipes; the system of soaking knows no change of seasons. All classes drink—the schoolmaster, the curate, the private saint, the publican and sinner, the tax-gatherer, the exciseman, the half-pay officer, the rough-rider, &c., &c." In Dumfries there were three great howffs—the King's Arms, the George, and the Globe—all, we believe, still extant. The Globe was Burns' favourite haunt. It is a snug little inn—to gain which you must pass through a close and ascend a stair, which was very

convenient for those "drouthy cronies" who did not like to be seen entering a hostelry, however respectable in its character, as it has always been—where you can still sit down in Burns' leathern chair in the corner, and see the words, "Lovely Polly Stewart" and other ditties, scrawled by him on the window-pane. Many strangers were then passing through Dumfries on their way from England to the north of Ireland; and perhaps for a hundred in our hero-worshipping days who pause to visit his grave, or call on his two houses, or drink his memory in the Globe or King's Arms, ten might then stop to see the living dog, so much better than the dead lion. "Is Burns still here? Is he at home? Do get me a sight of our great national poet. Send for him with my compliments (Mr. So So), and say I shall be so proud if he will step over and drink a single glass with me. I take no refusal." And Burns good-naturedly comes, and takes one glass, and then another, and another; and the afternoon becomes evening, and the evening midnight, and the rest can be imagined. The traveller goes to bed in the inn, rises in time for the stage-coach, has a headache, which he charitably imputes to the great poet who made him sit too late with him; but by the time he reaches Portpatrick is quite well, and tells all the people he meets of his glorious "Night with Burns." Burns reels home, gets a curtain lecture, sleeps a few uneasy hours, and rises miserable to his miserable drudgery. Once, we are told, returning from some such orgy, he met his neighbour, George Haugh, the blacksmith, going forth to his manly toil "until the evening," and contrasted himself with him—the one repairing to his healthful labour, the other to his brief and troubled repose. This state of matters, although only of course occasional, was not infrequent, and could not be expected with a man of his temperament to last very long.

Poor "Clarinda" had come back to Scotland. She found a cold reception from her husband. There would be little but a bandying of reproaches. Very likely he had heard of her intimacy with Burns; her admiration for him she would scorn to conceal, and he had been openly and grossly unfaithful to her. He used her ill, at all events, and she suffered besides from the climate. She resolved to come home, and did so in August, 1792. Burns had written her twice through her friend, Miss Peacock, but both letters had miscarried. He now, on the 6th of December, the fatal anniversary, wrote Miss Peacock again, "Clarinda's" return being not yet known. When he knew of it, he wrote to herself an elaborately-frenzied letter. It would seem as if these two lovers could ne'er be sundered. Like the curve seeking the asymptotes, for ever in vain, so perpetually fruitless was the pursuit going on between them.

But now the times had become portentous and electric. It was the hour fully come—memorable for evermore in the annals of men—when, in the language of a poet, kindred to Burns in enthusiasm for liberty, if not so masculine and brawny in his power—

> "Great France sprang forth,
> And seized, as if to break, the ponderous chains
> Which bind in woe the nations of the earth;"

and when her effort was welcomed with a shout of applause from all the most ardent and aspiring spirits in Europe. Wilder events, the imprisonment of the king and the formation of a republic and a revolutionary army in France, had succeeded. In Britain Paine's "Age of Reason" had struck at the root of despotism, with the force and will of the axe of a backwoods-man at some old pine of the forest, and the blow echoed through the universe. Societies of Friends of the People—in spite of Burke, in whose "Reflections on [or Reply to] the French Revolution" Vesuvius seemed to answer Etna—were formed. The Government got alarmed, prosecutions for sedition became the order of the day, and war with the infant republic was imminent. Burns' heart—a heart overshadowed and withered under the pressure of poverty, pride, and a galling sense of injury and neglect, leaped up when he saw the beautiful rainbow of the French Revolution bridging the sky; and in his usual outspoken and fearless manner he expressed his gladness. He ordered a Radical paper, started in Ayr by one Captain Johnstone—the same paper spoken of by Hector MacNeil in his "Will and Jean," when his hero and others

> "Clubbed and gat the *Gazetteer*."

He threw off a political song—

> "Here's a health to them that's awa'."

He uttered a few fierce speeches, and gave some rather daring toasts in private. It would seem as if he had a presentiment of some coming calamity, as on the 6th December, the same day he had written to Clarinda, he penned a dismal letter to Mrs. Dunlop, announcing a visit to Ayrshire, and his intention to see her. He spent four days at her house, and on his return he got an intimation that the Board of Excise were about to inquire into his political opinions and conduct, and to reprimand, if not to dismiss him, on account of them. This plunged him into a terrible state of apprehension that total and irreversible ruin lay before him and his family. He wrote a letter to Mr. Graham of Fintry, and although some expressions in it are so excessively exaggerated that you are led to suspect other influences at work besides alarm, there can be no doubt that there was real danger, and the report spread that he was dismissed; indeed, he says he would have been so but for Mr. Graham's intercession. Erskine of Mar (descended from the rebel earl, but himself a great Whig), hearing that Burns was cashiered, wrote to Mr.

Riddell offering to head a subscription for him. Burns in reply wrote (13th April, 1793) his noblest letter—that one at any rate in which his characteristic qualities of manly freedom and stubborn independence come out most strongly. His conduct was in the last degree imprudent, and in some measure unreasonable. He had sold his birthright for £50, and was it not now rather late to quarrel with the bargain? As a gauger and government servant he had no business to take part in political agitation; the fault lay in his position, or rather in the poverty which rendered that position involuntary and inevitable.

This dreary December merged in 1793. Mrs. Dunlop presented him with a cup which had been a family piece among the descendants of Sir William Wallace. This was soon employed in ladling out cold punch, which effectually overthrew some of his visitors; he having previously told her on the second of the month that he had given up "hard-drinking." It had now become a daring feat in any clergyman to baptize Burns' children. Mr. MacMorine of Caerlaverock, an able, worthy, free and easy man, had promised to Burns to come one day and sprinkle little Elizabeth Riddell, Burns' babe, and when he came, found a curious group; Burns was seated beside two companions, not of the most respectable appearance, and they had all evidently been up the whole night. Burns, however, was sober, or at least speedily sobered himself, and arranged matters for a ceremony about which he had forgot. The baptism passed off fairly, but MacMorine, we suppose, left humming the line--

"We'll gang nae mair to yon toun."

Some suppose that these were the "two worthy men" Burns refers to in a letter as having partaken too liberally of his "Wallace Cup."

Still the new year began well with Burns in a literary point of view, with "Poortith Cauld," written for and on a Miss Jane Blackstock, afterwards a Mrs. Whitier of Liverpool, for whom he seems to have had one of his passing *penchants*. On his birthday, the 25th of January, he wrote a sweet sonnet on a thrush singing in his morning walk, and next day "Lord Gregory." The story of this fine ballad is old. Peter Pindar, the popular poet of that day, had written some very good verses on it; but Burns certainly excelled him. There are some touching lines on a similar story—that of a maiden seduced by a lord and going to his door to die, to be found in the "Roman" by our dear deceased friend, Sidney Dobell, entitled a "Winter Night," which we never have been able to read without tears. Less powerful and condensed than Burns', it is more pre-Raphaelitically simple and minutely true. We venture to quote some passages of it in a note.*

"Clarinda" again turns up for the penultimate time. Burns, we said, through accident, had not heard of her return to Scotland for a long while after it had occurred;

* "And she stood at its father's gate,
With her baby at her breast;
'Twas about the hour of rest,
There were lights about the place.
The old moon began to sink
(Long like her upon the wane);
It grew dark, she drew her hood
Close about her pallid face.
At the portal door she sate,
Where she will not sit again.
'Little one,' she slowly said,
Bending low her lowly head,
'In all this wide world only thee
And my shame he gave to me.
When thou camest I did think
On that other gift of his.
Hating that, I dreaded this;
Thou art fair, but so was he—
'Tis a winning smile of thine,
Ah what fatal praise it is!
One such smile once won all mine.
Little one I not repine;
It befits me well to wait
My Lord's will, till I be dead;
Once it was a gentler will.'
. . . . . .

'Little one,' she said, 'the cot
Where I bore thee was too low
For a haughty baron's bride.
Little one, I hope to go
Where the palace halls are wide.
When thou prattlest at his knee,
Wilt thou sometimes speak of me?
Tell him on some eve,' she said,
'Where thou knowest I shall be.
When he hears that I am grand,
In those mansions ever fair,
Will he hope to meet me there
As a lady of the land;
And think no more in scorn
Upon thee and on the dead?'
Furious blasts arose, and
Grown gross
With the licence of the hour,
They smote the mother and the child!
Dark night grew darker, not a smile
Came from one star. The moon, long since,
Had sunk behind the mountain.
At the mirkest, somewhat stirred
The sere leaves where the mother sate.
For a moment the babe cried,
Something in the silence sighed,
And the night was still. O Fate!
What hadst thou done? O that hard night
Which morn must see! When winter went
About the earth at dawn, he rent
His locks in pain, and cast grey hairs
Upon it as he past. So when
Maids, poor mother, wail thy lot,
Mournful at the close of day
By that legendary spot,
Oft they tell us, weeping, how
Hoar frost lay on thy pale brow
When they found thee, and was not
Paler than the clay."

but when he learned she was in Edinburgh he wrote her a letter full of ravings about wounded pride, ruined peace, frantic disappointed passion, and adjured her to write him no more—words which she began to rate at their true value. One gets tired of the eternal popping up (so it was on Burns' part at least) of this equivocal and ridiculous passion in a history where there is so much of real suffering and sorrow. We turn with far more interest to his correspondence with Thomson, and to the care and enthusiasm he was bestowing on his songs. We remember that when Hannah More expressed her wonder to Dr. Johnson how the author of "Paradise Lost" could write such poor sonnets, the Doctor replied, "Milton, madam, could cut out a Colossus from a rock, but could not carve heads upon cherry stones." But Burns could do both. Hogarth was never more Hogarth than when drawing heads upon his thumb nail; and so Burns, our Scottish poet, carved immortal passions and poetry, faces of surpassing beauty and forms of unequalled grace, upon his cherry stones—his smallest ballads and bits of ballads. We are sorry to find him underrating "Mary Morrison," calling it nothing remarkable, while he praises a most bombastic effort, "Raving winds around her blowing," as his best verses. But Burns, to do him justice, very seldom indeed errs in his estimate of his own works. We find him applying about this time, on the strength of a burgess ticket he had got when he first visited Dumfries in 1787, asking cheaper education for his children at the public school; his request was complied with at once and gracefully by the magistrates, and his sons were getting a good education at the time their father died. A new edition of his Poems was issued about this time. He does not seem to have derived any profit from it; but he took the opportunity of sending copies to some of his friends, such as Patrick Miller and the new Lord Glencairn. One evening he was sitting in the inn at Broomhill with two friends, when a poor soldier passed the window. Burns, on a sudden impulse, called him in and inquired the story of his adventures, afterwards fell into a fit of abstraction, and in fine, produced the song "The Soldier's Return," which became not only popular with the general public, but raised his repute for loyalty, which had rather sunk in the land. Yet, when he heard of Dumourier deserting the army of the Republic, he broke out into the fiery lines—"You 're welcome to despots, Dumourier;" nor was this his only rhymed and spoken offence. When at some feast or other Pitt was proposed as a toast, Burns was for substituting George Washington as the greater man; and when the other was preferred, he let his glass stand untasted before him and preserved a sullen silence. He wrote a song of a somewhat equivocal character—"The last time I came o'er the muir"—although we think the evidence by no means clear that it was prompted by a disreputable passion for Mrs. Riddell. What passion is in it was probably excited by the fumes of the port wine, and perished in those, or was absorbed into and evaporated by the song.

At Whitsuntide Burns and his family removed to a self-contained house in what was then known as Millbank Brae, but is now called Burns Street. It is at present the dwelling-house of the keepers of a Ragged School which stands on the south of it—a most respectable couple, Malcolm by name.

In December, 1877, we visited this house, passed through all the rooms, but paused with special emotion in the room where he died. The bed is under the wall, and on the very spot of Burns' deathbed. Many thoughts passed through our mind, chiefly of sadness, tinged with a little exasperation. All very well, we thought, to talk of posthumous honours, and universal influence, and enviable immortality. What are all these to the poor inhabitant that once occupied this miserable corner? What availeth to him that the enormous blunder, and misconception, and cruelty perpetrated on him living, ceased with his death, and that since whole trade-winds of "mouth-honour breath" have passed over him? that he asked for bread, and received a forest of statues and busts? Who can tell whether these are known to him in his present state of existence; or if known, that they can give him any pleasure? How much a very little of all this paid him in advance would have soothed his wounded spirit, consoled him in the prospect of death, of leaving his widow destitute and his children abjects! The cry of a dying minister to his wife yet rings in our hearing after many years, "You will be a widow, and a poor widow!" and that cry might have been the cry of Burns. But it is the way of the world, and a miserable way of a hard and heartless world it is; since for the sums given and the incense offered up after death, the donors were recouped by the gratification of their vanity, and perhaps by the calming of their remorse—if remorse they were able to feel; and probably not a shilling paid implied any self-sacrifice. But Burns was "a proud man, and a dissipated man, and a man to whom it was difficult to do any real service." If this had been said after any sincere trial to do him good, it might have been something to the purpose. But the priest and the Levite had passed by on the other side, and the offices of the good Samaritan were performed, not to the living man, but to the cold and senseless corpse! Perhaps such thoughts might come in more logically afterwards; but we prefer recording them now, as we still seem to stand by Burns' deathbed in this upper room of the Old Mill Vennel of Dumfries. Well do we remember many years ago, in the company of Thomas Carlyle and Thomas Aird, passing this house, and the mood in which we passed it was that of silence—the silence of pity, love,

and a shade of awe; and how the feeling, awakened but not expressed—an hour afterwards, in a walk through a deep-wooded, moonlit lane leading up from the Nith—became in Carlyle inspiration, as he sounded on his way in a stream of talk so wild, holy, and melancholy, that it seemed as if the great inspired soul of Burns were incarnate in his person and speaking through his lips!

Chambers proves that Burns at the time he entered his new house was by no means rich, and quotes a letter of his to some unknown friend earnestly begging the loan of three or four guineas, and complaining bitterly of the times. Yet he would take no money from Thomson for his songs, and even fiercely rejected an offer of it again and again made by him. He seemed to think that song-writing must be a labour of love, and that the idea of cash connected with it would deprive it of all spontaneity. He could not turn his blood into ducats; and songs or rhymes were to him, to quote Shakspeare's beautiful words again, as the "ruddy drops which visited his sad heart." William Motherwell got ten shillings for "Jeanie Morisson," the most natural and pathetic of recent Scottish lyrics. Thomas Aird got two guineas (!) for his "Devil's Dream on Mount Acksbech," one of the grandest flights of modern imagination. But Burns got nothing whatever for what has been truly called a world of songs, and a world as varied as vast—nothing but the solitary joy and triumph of the Demiurge. Neither he nor his family could dine on "Scots wha hae" or a "Man's a man for a' that;" and in vain might he say with Milton—

> "Ever against *eating* cares,
> Lap me in soft Lydian airs."

One cause of his peculiar poverty at this time was that, owing to the war, an extra income derived from the unloading of foreign vessels was stopped.

We are now as far as 1793, and find Syme and Burns on an excursion to Galloway, a country well worth a more thorough exploration than he had then time to give it, with its fine meandering rivers, its gloomy moorlands, alternating with rich reaches of arable ground and alluvial scenery; the storm of mountains surging above Newton Stewart, the beautiful bay of Wigton, the exquisite coast scenery around Ravenshall, where you find a combination of different trees as varied as Spenser's "Wood of Error," with rocks, and caves, and creeks, bold promontories plunging into the blue sea on the one hand, and high bleak mountains piercing the blue sky on the other (Guy Mannering's country), the famous Castle Kennedy, and the Mull of Galloway planting its foot into the ocean with an air of such blunt and bold defiance! We quote all John Syme's account of the journey, and a supplementary bit from Mr. Carson:—

"I got Burns a gray Highland shelty to ride on. We dined the first day, 27th July, 1793, at Glendonwyne's of Parton—a beautiful situation on the banks of the Dee. In the evening we walked out, and ascended a gentle eminence, from which we had as fine a view of Alpine scenery as can well be imagined. A delightful soft evening showed all its wilder as well as its grander graces. Immediately opposite, and within a mile of us, we saw Airds, a charming romantic place, where dwelt Lowe, the author of 'Mary, weep no more for me.' This was classical ground for Burns. He viewed 'the highest hill which rises o'er the source of Dee,' and would have stayed till 'the passing spirit' had appeared, had we not resolved to reach Kenmure that night. We arrived as Mr. and Mrs. Gordon were sitting down to supper.

"Here is a genuine baron's seat. The castle, an old building, stands on a large natural moat. In front, the river Ken winds for several miles through the most fertile and beautiful *holm*, till it expands into a lake twelve miles long, the banks of which, on the south, present a fine and soft landscape of green knolls, natural wood, and here and there a gray rock. On the north the aspect is great, wild, and I may say, tremendous. In short, I can scarcely conceive a scene more terribly romantic than the castle of Kenmure. Burns thinks so highly of it that he meditates a description of it in poetry; indeed, I believe he has begun the work. We spent three days with Mr. Gordon, whose polished hospitality is of an original and endearing kind. Mrs. Gordon's lap dog, *Echo*, was dead. She would have an epitaph for him. Several had been made. Burns was asked for one. This was setting Hercules to his distaff. He disliked the subject, but to please the lady, he would try. Here is what he produced—

> 'In wood and wild, ye warbling throng,
> Your heavy loss deplore!
> Now half extinct your powers of song,
> Sweet Echo is no more.
>
> Ye jarring, screeching things around,
> Scream your discordant joys!
> Now half your din of tuneless song
> With Echo silent lies.'

"We left Kenmure and went to Gatehouse. I took him the moor-road, where savage and desolate regions extended wide around. The sky was sympathetic with the wretchedness of the soil; it became lowering and dark. The hollow winds sighed, the lightnings gleamed, the thunder rolled. The poet enjoyed the awful scene; he spoke not a word, but seemed rapt in meditation. In a little while the rain began to fall; it poured in floods upon us. For three hours did the wild elements rumble their belly-full upon our defenceless heads. Oh! oh! 'twas foul. We got utterly wet; and to revenge ourselves, Burns insisted at Gatehouse on our getting utterly drunk.

"From Gatehouse we went next day to Kirkcudbright, through a fine country. But here I must tell you that Burns had got a pair of jemmy boots for the journey, which had been thoroughly wet, and which had been dried in such manner that it was not possible to get them on again. The brawny poet tried force, and tore them to shreds. A whiffling vexation of this sort is more trying to the temper than a serious calamity. We were going to St. Mary's Isle, the seat of the Earl of Selkirk, and the forlorn Burns was discomfited at the thought of his ruined boots. A sick stomach and a headache lent their aid, and the man of verse was quite *accablé*. I attempted to reason with him. Mercy on us, how he did fume and rage! Nothing could reinstate him in temper. I tried various expedients, and at last hit on one that succeeded: I showed him the house of [Garlieston?], across the Bay of Wigton. Against [the Earl of Galloway?], with whom he was offended, he expectorated his spleen, and regained a most agreeable temper. He was in a most epigrammatic humour indeed! He afterwards fell on humbler game. There is one . . . . whom he does not love; he had a passing blow at him—

'When ——, deceased, to the devil went down,
'Twas nothing would serve him but Satan's own crown;
Thy fool's head, quoth Satan, that crown shall wear never:
I grant thou'rt as wicked, but not quite so clever.'

"Well, I am to bring you to Kirkcudbright along with our poet without boots. I carried the torn ruins across my saddle in spite of his fulminations, and in contempt of appearances; and what is more, Lord Selkirk carried them in his coach to Dumfries. He insisted they were worth mending.

"We reached Kirkcudbright about one o'clock. I had promised that we should dine with one of the first men in our country, J. Dalzell. But Burns was in a wild and obstreperous humour, and swore he would not dine where he should be under the smallest restraint. We prevailed, therefore, on Mr. Dalzell to dine with us in the inn, and had a very agreeable party. In the evening we set out for St. Mary's Isle. Robert had not absolutely regained the milkiness of good temper, and it occurred once or twice to him, as he rode along, that St. Mary's Isle was the seat of a lord; yet that lord was not an aristocrat, at least in his sense of the word. We arrived about eight o'clock, as the family were at tea and coffee. St. Mary's Isle is one of the most delightful places that can, in my opinion, be formed by the assemblage of every soft but not tame object which constitutes natural and cultivated beauty. But not to dwell on its external graces, let me tell you that we found all the ladies of the family (all beautiful) at home, and some strangers; and among others, who but Urbani! The Italian sang us many Scottish songs, accompanied with instrumental music. The two young ladies of Selkirk sang also. We had the song of 'Lord Gregory,' which I asked for, to have an opportunity of calling on Burns to recite his ballad to that tune. He did recite it; and such was the effect, that a dead silence ensued. It was such a silence as a mind of feeling naturally preserves when it is touched with that enthusiasm which banishes every other thought but the contemplation and indulgence of the sympathy produced. Burns' 'Lord Gregory' is, in my opinion, a most beautiful and affecting ballad. The fastidious critic may perhaps say some of the sentiments and imagery are of too elevated a kind for such a style of composition; for instance, 'Thou bolt of heaven that passest by,' and 'Ye mustering thunder,' &c.; but this is a cold-blooded objection, which will be said rather than felt.

"We enjoyed a most happy evening at Lord Selkirk's. We had, in every sense of the word, a feast, in which our minds and our senses were equally gratified. The poet was delighted with his company, and acquitted himself to admiration. The lion that had raged so violently in the morning was now as mild and gentle as a lamb. Next day we returned to Dumfries; and so ends our peregrination. I told you that, in the midst of the storm on the wilds of Kenmure, Burns was wrapt in meditation. What do you think he was about? He was charging the English army, along with Bruce, at Bannockburn. He was engaged in the same manner on our ride home from St. Mary's Isle, and I did not disturb him. Next day he produced me the following address of Bruce to his troops, and gave me a copy for Dalzell—

'Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,'" &c.

Mr. Carson says:—"The only friends of the host and hostess invited to meet the travellers, Burns and Syme, at Kenmure, were the Rev. John Gillespie, the highly-esteemed minister of the parish (Kells), and myself.

"On the evening preceding their departure, the bard having expressed his intention of climbing to the top of 'the highest hill that rises o'er the source of Dee,' there to see the arbour of Lowe, the author of the celebrated song, 'Mary's Dream,' Mr. Gordon proposed that they should all sail down the loch in his barge *Glenkens*, to the Airds Hill below Lowe's seat. Seeing that this proposal was intended in compliment by the worthy host both to the bard and to Mr. Gillespie, who had been the patron of Lowe, the gentlemen all concurred; and the weather proving propitious next morning, the vessel soon dropt down to the foot of Loch Ken with all the party on board. Meanwhile, Mr. Gordon's groom led the travellers' horses round to the Boat-o'-Rhone, saddled and bridled, that each rider might mount on descending from the poet's seat; but the barge unfortunately grounded before reaching the proposed landing-place—an obstruction not anticipated

by any of the party. Mr. Gordon, with the assistance of an oar, vaulted from the prow of the little vessel to the beach, and was soon followed in like manner by Mr. Syme and myself; thus leaving only the venerable pastor of Kells and the bard on board. The former, being too feeble to jump, as we had done, to land, expressed a desire to remain in the vessel till Mr. Gordon and I returned; upon hearing which, the generous bard instantly slipt into the water, which was, however, so deep as to wet him to the knees. After a short entreaty he succeeded in getting the clergyman on his shoulders; on observing which Mr. Syme raised his hands, laughed immoderately, and exclaimed: 'Well, Burns, of all the men on earth, you are the last that I could have expected to see priest-ridden!' We laughed also, but Burns did not seem to enjoy the joke. He made no reply, but carried his load silently through the reeds to land.

"When Mr. Syme's account of this excursion with the bard into Galloway appeared in Dr. Currie's first edition of the 'Life and Works of Robert Burns,' the Glenkens people, who were actors in this part of the drama, were very much surprised to find the above incident not even alluded to; but we plainly perceived that Syme had only taken a few incidents of the journey as pegs to hang other drapery upon. We were all fully satisfied that it was by the bard's wading in the loch that his new boots were so thoroughly wet, and that the choler or independence next day manifested by him to Syme was only the result of his wounded feelings at having been made such a laughing-stock by his friend for merely rendering the assistance due by common humanity to old age or infirmity, which Mr. Gordon and myself charged ourselves afterwards for having overlooked in that instance."

And thus the first rude draught of the grandest War Ode in the world was produced. No doubt Burns, in a letter dated September that year, speaks to Thomson of having in his evening walk along the Nith thrown off what he calls a kind of Scottish ode—"Scots wha hae;" and Chambers rather perplexes than clears up the matter in his remarks. John Syme was a man of honour and a genuine enthusiast, and would not, in his letter to Dr. Currie, have given a false report of what he had witnessed; nor could he have forgotten at that date such a remarkable circumstance. In the solitude of Galloway Burns, we believe, produced and gave to Syme the first rude draught; on the banks of the Nith he expanded it to its perfect and final form. "Scots wha hae," we venture to say, could not have been conceived except in a thunderstorm and on the dreary moors—the place is the same still, all wanted is the poet—between Kenmure and Gatehouse. The song tuned itself to the thunder, and might, as Carlyle says, "be sung by the throat of the whirlwind." Every line is electric; and the eye of the poet meeting the blackness of the sky, with fierce flashes falling across it, like spilt shafts from the quiver of Death, and vibrating as they fell, must have been a sight to dream of, not to see. The excitement was of that fearful and half-frenzied sort which sought relief and gained the gate of slumber through the power of a coarser intoxication. Burns at Gatehouse got "utterly drunk." It is not to be defended—it will be sternly condemned; but it is hardly, at that time and in a man like Burns, to be wondered at. Thus Edmund Kean could get no other relief, after "Othello" or "Lear" had awakened a delirium which ran through his brain and nerves like molten lead. Thus Fox and Sheridan rounded off some of those tremendous philippics against the tyrants of India and the Continent, which are matched only in those by which Demosthenes

> "Shook the Arsenal and fulmined over Greece,
> To Macedon and Artaxerxes' throne!"

In his age perhaps only one man of Burns' order of mind and genius—namely, Burke—was much more temperate than Burns.

Peter Pindar, alluded to above as the author of another poem on Lord Gregory, and considerably overrated by Burns, does not deserve, on the other hand, the cold water cast by Chambers on his claims. He calls him a man of moderate abilities, speaks of his ribald recklessness, and so forth. Macaulay somewhere expresses a much higher opinion of him. Dr. Wolcot was no common man. His appearance and enormous brow proved it, apart from his works. His patronage of Opie, the painter, testified to his discernment as well as heart. His witty tales will last as long as the English language. He was a coarse man, and many of his writings are as coarse as they are all eminently clever. But in political integrity he rivalled Burns himself. He is a star that has somewhat receded from his pride of place, but he remains in the firmament still. His lowest praise is that he was a piercing thorn in the king's side. In a letter to Horne Tooke, Junius applies this as a compliment to Wilkes; and such as it was, it was equally deserved by Peter Pindar.

More truly, Chambers notes with wonder Burns' extreme fertility of song-writing this season. Gagged and muzzled in politics, told that it was his business to obey and be silent, not to think or speak, he found no outcome for his fancy and no channel for his feeling but song. Among the beautiful songs he produced this autumn, besides his final version of "Scots wha hae," we notice his "Auld Lang Syne," a song which for many years has been sung at the close of every festive gathering on the New-year, and often at other seasons, throughout the world; and the myriads then standing up and grasping each other's hands, and who for the nonce are "brithers for a' that," are standing up in honour and recognition of

Burns. Burns has added one innocent, universal, and unselfish joy to the list of the world's pleasures; and surely the universal poet, who is the universal benefactor too, is twice blessed!

Many were now disposed to say—Let the poet confine himself to his art, and leave politics alone. Thus do they often say to men of eminence, as if excellence in one department disqualified them from interfering in another; and because an extraordinary man is only, after all, an ordinary citizen, he has no right to speak at all on subjects which, as a citizen, interest him! Burns, the greatest of Scotland's poets, was not, perhaps, the profoundest of politicians; but was this to seal his lips? The mere feeling of such a man on political matters, the mere side he takes, is itself a matter of importance as a weight in the scales with that of many ordinary citizens. Burns felt this himself, and felt besides an ardent interest in the political questions of the times. Hence, even after his rebuke by the Excise and his enforced silence, he was now and then nearly getting into scrapes by his outspokenness. He had taken a great part in a public library which had been established in Dumfries, was presented by the committee with a share in it free of entrance-money and of the quarterly contribution, in honour of his literary reputation, and elected a member of committee. And he presented four books to it —"Humphrey Clinker," "Julia De Roubigne," "Knox's History of the Reformation" (a special favourite of his), and "De Lolme on the British Constitution." This volume, chiefly owing to the praise of Junius, who calls it a treatise "deep, solid, and ingenious," was then counted a book of great authority. On the fly-leaf Burns had written—"Mr. Burns presents this book to the library, and begs they will take it as a creed of British liberty until they find a better." Early in the morning after it had been presented he called on Mr. Thomson, the provost of Dumfries, ere he was up, and asked to see the volume, as he was afraid he had written on it something that might bring him into trouble. It was brought; and having got some paste, he proceeded to paste over it the fly-leaf, so as to conceal it. It could, however, be seen by holding up the leaf to the light. Poor Burns! In politics as in charity he needed to learn the lesson not to tell his left hand what his right was about, and when he tried to deceive he made only a bungling hypocrite. On another occasion he called on his neighbour, George Haugh the blacksmith, and gave him Paine's "Common Sense" and "Rights of Man," and told him to keep them for him, since if found in his possession ruin would follow. On another occasion still (we were told by a clerical gentleman in Dumfries) Burns and a few other Republican friends were met, as they met occasionally, in a room in an inn to discuss politics, when the cry got up that the magistrates and their myrmidons were at hand, and they all leaped out of a window and made an abrupt and narrow escape. At that time a cloud of suspicion and espionage rested over all the land, but seemed thickest over Dumfries. We may liken it to that cholera cloud which, in 1832, Dr. Robert Knox described to us as hanging above the Queen of the South, and which he and his brother, who were travelling toward the town, and felt themselves (the brother particularly) getting ill as they approached, avoided by riding in another direction, till gaining Lochmaben they became quite well, and heard the next morning that the pest had come down over the place like a blanket, in the evening, and slain its hundreds. Alas! Burns had not the power that others possessed of removing from the sphere of danger, but must wait gloomily where he was till the advent of better times.

It was about this time—surely one of the darkest points in his whole history—that Burns, as he tells Mr. MacMurdo, to whom he was paying the debt of a few guineas (after which "he didn't owe a shilling to man or woman either"), began to form a collection of licentious songs, known as the "Merry Muses," and which is certainly the biggest literary blot on his memory. We own to having read these unworthy productions; and while we admit the plea that many of them are not, as a whole, from the pen of Burns, that those which are manifestly his are the purest, and that to his hand we trace all those strokes of quirky humour and naïveté which are found in the most and worst of them, we freely grant that the "Merry Muses" may be called, what Leigh Hunt calls Cotton's "Virgil," a "beastly book," and is rank throughout with the very miasma of uncleanness. We believe that most of what Burns wrote in it was written while in a state of intoxication. Than the gentleman who showed us the copy—the late Robert White of Newcastle, author of "Otterburne" and "Bannockburn," works both of high antiquarian value—a purer, sincerer, simpler being, or one who more admired Burns, never existed. Deep sorrow, rather than anger, was in both our hearts as we went over it together. White told us he knew an innkeeper (he mentioned his name, but we, who had no thought then —it was in 1872—of writing a life of Burns, neglected to take it down) whose house the bard frequented, who said that up to a certain point he was most delightful society, but beyond that he would often spend the rest of the evening in singing obscene songs; at a certain stage the poet and the man were spirited away—the Burns evaporated, the Brute only remained. White mentioned this to us repeatedly, and it was undoubtedly true. Chambers gives what is, we suppose, an accurate enough account of the way in which the collection came to see the light, after Burns' death, through the cupidity of a bookseller. He calls it a "mean-looking volume." This was true

of the copy White showed us; but we once saw, for a mere minute or two, a better got-up edition (not for sale, however), in two volumes, in the shop of the late Maurice Ogle, publisher, Glasgow. This miserable book may probably be still creeping, like the plague in Constantinople, in obscure regions of the country. But its very vileness prevents it from being noxious; it kindles no feeling but disgust, awakens no passion but anger, or rather grief—disgust at the volume itself, grief for the author.

While on this ungrateful subject, we may as well quote what Byron says of Burns' letters, which had been shown him by Allen, Lord Holland's librarian—a man of vast and curious erudition:—"Allen has lent me a quantity of Burns' unpublished and never to be published letters. They are full of oaths and obscene songs. What an antithetical mind! tenderness, roughness, delicacy, coarseness, sentiment, sensuality, soaring and grovelling, dirt and Deity, all mixed up in one compound of poor clay." This is from his Journal; but in his Letter to Bowles he says farther—"I have seen myself a collection of letters of another eminent—nay, pre-eminent—deceased poet, so abominably gross and elaborately coarse, that I do not believe they could be paralleled in our language. What is more strange is, that some of them are couched as postscripts to his serious and sentimental letters, to which are tacked either a piece of prose or some verses of the most hyperbolical obscenity. He himself says that 'if obscenity (he uses a much coarser word) were the sin against the Holy Ghost, he most certainly could not be saved.'" We have not seen the letters referred to, but perhaps Mr. White's statement points out one way of explaining them—the sentimental part might be written before dinner, and the postscript added after. This is an explanation, though, of course, not a sufficient palliation of the offence. Burns, writing to Mrs. Dunlop, Dr. Moore, and Dugald Stewart, could not have written obscenely; since he would not, one would think, have allowed himself to write to them if he had been in this state. Writing to others whom he respected less, he might have permitted wine and passion to have their way; and then, as when he was with the innkeeper, the Burns vanished, the Brute survived (and is there not more or less of the brutal nature in all men?), and hence came the "hyperbolical obscenity."

During the summer of 1793 Burns was little at Woodley Park; Mrs. Riddell was away in London for some months, and afterwards her husband was called suddenly on business to the West Indies, and when he returned found her alone in the mansion house. Here Burns, according to the etiquette of the times, and perhaps also owing to his peculiar reputation, was not permitted to visit her, but would have occasionally entered her box at the theatre had it not been for what he calls "lobster-coated puppies," *i.e.*, officers belonging to a regiment in Dumfries, and with whom it was the fate of the bard more than once to come into collision. He suspected that they had spread reports against his loyalty to the Board of Excise; they feared his power of scathing sarcasm, and cowered at the flash of his dark eye. They not only came between him and Mrs. Riddell, but on another occasion Miss Benson, afterwards Mrs. Basil Montagu, met his displeasure for mingling with these "epauletted puppies," as he called them, and seeming to neglect him. They got a handle against him, when one evening heated with wine in a private company he gave as a toast—"May our success in the present war be equal to the justice of 'our cause!'" At these words a captain present chose to be so seriously offended that a quarrel was the consequence, and Burns the next morning had to write a letter which was equivalent to a humble apology. Worst of all, Mr. Riddell having returned, and Burns having resumed his visits to Woodley Park, he one day committed himself by a nameless insult to his fair hostess, in remorse for which he next morning indited a letter to her purporting to be written in the abode of the damned; this produced a breach between them, which gradually widened into a great gulph fixed till very near his end, and Burns took his revenge by certain bitter lampoons, which did as little honour to his gentlemanly feeling as to his genius. Rejected at Woodley Park, he continued his visits to Tinwald Downs, where John Bushby was landlord—a remarkable person, who had risen from the ranks to opulence, was a solicitor, a banker, a country gentleman, kept open table, and had Burns often among his guests. It is said that Burns sometimes preferred dining in the room of the housekeeper, a decent lady reduced in circumstances, and afterwards was brought up along with a new batch of claret, like a bag-pipe player, to amuse the company. Chambers hints that Burns liked this: he might at times, at other times he stormed. The story at least is told that when once brought up stairs and to table, like Samson to make the people sport, he showed what terrible sport a Samson could make by pouring out a torrent of invective, flaked by oaths, shaking the pillars of the house, and rushing out in unceremonious haste and recalcitrating fury! This perhaps is a mythical, but decidedly improved version, of Chambers' tales about Burns being snared by Bushby into swallowing a piece of pudding boiling hot, while Bushby laughed till the tears were gushing out at his eyes in emulous sympathy with those produced by heat in the eyes of Burns; and Burns got angry, and this little bit of hot pudding led to a long coolness between them—an incident altogether more characteristic of the "Bashful Man" in fiction than of a being like Burns in reality. At all events Burns and Bushby ceased to be friends, and the poet visited the offences of the sire on the son in his lines "Æsopus to Maria," in which he lashes Bushby

Maitland as an advocate, and a man reputed much inferior to his father in intellect.

Amidst all this tempest of quarrel, contrition, and chagrin, the year 1794 dawned on our impolitic poet. It dawned darkly upon him personally and in public estimation; but we know not if his mind was ever stronger, prouder, yet tenderer than then, and if ever soured sensibility, feigned pride, and irritated passion produced through the compound stimulus they gave to genius (with the one exception of Byron's writings in Venice, "Childe Harold," "Manfred," and "Don Juan") such works as his noble letter to Cunningham, dated the 25th February, "The Lovely Lass of Inverness," the "Red, Red Rose," and above all, the "Vision of Liberty," decidedly, in the brevity of its compass, the concentration of its power, and the vividness of its imagery, one of Burns' very noblest strains. It is a *torso*, ranking not in size but in merit, with "Cambuscan" in Chaucer, with "Hyperion," "The Excursion;" greater in its mutilation, even as the splinter of a statue gives a better idea of the infinite than a statue itself. It was inspired by a visit to Lincluden Abbey. Burns often there

"Turned from men his lonely feet,"

especially when evening was resting on the landscape, and he could glide out like a ghost to meet with the loneliness and lurid grandeur of the Abbey, carrying a ruin to ruins, as if to compare the fissures in a broken heart with the larger inroads of time upon one of the sublime structures of the past. Where, indeed, can the unhappy repair to escape from their own sorrows, or from the unthinking glee or constitutional cheerfulness of others, more fitly than to those spots where naked Nature dwells alone, or adopts and fondles the fallen fanes of Religion and the broken masterpieces of Art? She will not then and there seem to insult them by her laughing luxuriance, her foliage fluttering, as if in vain display, with the glossy gilding of her flowers and the sunny sparkle and song of her waters. But she will uplift a mightier and older voice. She will soothe them by a sterner ministry. She will (as says De Quincey in his sublime *Suspiria de Profundis*) "teach them old truths, abysmal truths, awful truths." She will answer their sighs by the groans of the creation travailing in pain; suck up their tears in the sweat of her great agonies; reflect their tiny wrinkles in those deep scars and stabs upon her forehead, which speak of ages of struggle and contest; give back the gloom of their brows in the frowns of her forests, her mountain solitudes, and her waste midnight darkness; perhaps infuse something, too, of her own sublime expectancy (the "earnest expectation of the creature") into their spirits, and dismiss them from her society, it may be sadder, but certainly wiser men. How admirably is Nature suited to all moods of all men! In Spring she is gay with the light-hearted; in Summer gorgeous as its sun to those fiery spirits who seem made for a warmer day; in Autumn she spreads over all poetic hearts a mellow and unearthly charm; and even in Winter she attracts her own few but faithful votaries, who love to see her severe charms then unveiled, and enjoy her solemn communion none the less that they enjoy it by themselves. To use the words of the late John Wright of Ayrshire, a true poet undeservedly forgotten, addressing the Spring specially, but it applies to all Nature—

"Thou op'st a storehouse for all hues of men:
To hardihood thou, blust'ring from the North,
Roll'st dark; hast sighs for them that would complain;
Sharp winds to clear the head of wit and worth,
And melody for those that follow mirth;
Clouds for the gloomy, tears for those that weep;
Flowers blighted in the bud for those that birth
Untimely sorrow o'er; and skies where sweep
Fleets of a thousand sail for those who plow the deep."

Two or three days after our first visit to Burns' house we went along with Thomas Aird, on the evening of a burning Sabbath day, leaving Dumfries while the full moon had newly risen and was resting on the top of the Crichton Asylum, to Lincluden; the Nith talking to us all the while in her gentlest mood of soliloquy, and when we reached the pile, the moon appearing in the eastern window, acting as our guide into the interior, and shedding her "holier day" with an effect wholly magical and indescribable upon the sides and secret places of the ruin.

"It was a night so still and fair,
We scarce would start to meet a spirit there."

But the "stern and stalwart ghaist" whom Burns encountered could only appear in the light of the "cauld blae north," and to the music of the "hissing eery din" produced by its fantastic and capricious fires—

"Like fortune's favours, tint as win'."

Burns eldest son used to point out the spot where his father loved to rest and muse on two lovely landscapes, which can be seen from a little mount to the south, as if set in the windows of the ancient building.

In one of the panes of the Globe Tavern, as already hinted, may yet be seen, scrawled in Burns' handwriting, the stanza—

"O lovely Polly Stewart!
O charming Polly Stewart!
There's not a flower that blooms in May
That 's half so fair as thou art!
. . . . . .
Worth and truth eternal youth
Will gie to Polly Stewart."

This young woman was reared in good circumstances in a

place near Ellisland, and married to a wealthy gentleman. She came, however, to grief, lost her way in life, lived in a poor position in Maxwellton, near Dumfries, and died in France. Alas for poetical prophecy! Alas for the poetical prophet himself! who while free to drink jorums at the Globe, and to scribble down the names of heroines on its windows, was sinking out of the sight and the respect of that upper class which, perhaps, he had done but too much to conciliate. The Riddells of Friars' Carse followed the example of the Riddells of Woodley Park in cutting Burns. Glenriddell himself died soon after, and Burns sang his loss; and as he had in his possession some MS. * books of Burns', especially one collection of his minor pieces, Burns felt a natural desire to reclaim them, the more as much of it was unfit for the public eye. In doing this he applied to a sister of Mr. Riddell's, and his letter to her shows how sore he felt about the numerous rumours which were then being circulated against him. Burns had now come round to the second *Nadir* in his life; 1794 was indeed the darkest year in his dark sojourn on earth. His expected promotion in the Excise was now, as it turned out, arrested for ever. Even the secret solace of song-writing was for a time closed this spring. Many doors in Dumfries and its neighbourhood, which had been thrown wide open, were now shut in his face. Insinuations of the darkest kind, probably darker than the truth, were circulating busily against his morals, his religious opinions, the *jeux d'esprit* he was inditing, and the company of his private hours. And now occurred the melancholy incident communicated by David MacCulloch of Ardwell—recorded by Lockhart and commented on so plaintively by Carlyle—of Burns on a grand ball night in Dumfries (perhaps in honour of the king's birthday) walking along the shady side of the street alone, while the opposite side was gay with parties of ladies and gentlemen who had assembled for the ball; and how when the young MacCulloch proposed they should cross the street and join them, Burns replied, "Nay, nay, my young friend, that's all over now," and proceeded to quote some lines from Grizel Baillie's ballad—

> "His bonnet stood ance fu' fair on his brow,
> His auld ane looked better than mony ane's new;
> But now he let's wear ony gate it will hing,
> And casts himsel' dowie upon the corn bing;
>
> Oh! were we young, as we ance hae been,
> We sud hae been galloping down on yon green,
> And linking it o'er the lily-white lea;
> *And were na my heart light I wad dee!*"

Sad, too, his taking MacCulloch home and entertaining him with punch, and Jean's singing his own songs till the hour of assembly came, when he was left alone in his house to brood bitterly on past and present. The whole is characteristic of the proud and self-contained poet. Fielding when in deep waters was happy on a mutton chop and a bottle of champagne, as happy as his nature could possibly be. But Burns was not a Fielding; he had a deeper moral constitution, a prouder spirit, and a keener sense of right and wrong. The iron had entered into his soul, and his main sense of suffering was, not that he was rejected and despised of men, but that he knew he in some measure deserved it. We remember no parallel instance of the universal rejection of a gifted and admired man, except that of Byron in 1816. But Byron possessed the money power, and used it in accomplishing a Parthian retreat from his angry country. Burns' poverty compelled him to remain, else unquestionably he would have fled Dumfries, and shot barbed arrows behind him at every step of his departure. As it was, he persisted in the duties of his calling, consumed his own smoke as successfully as possible, and tried to hope and do the best he could. But we can conceive few more painful spectacles than that of this great, unhappy, indignant being pacing along the banks of the Nith or going out to Lincluden, perhaps, as of old, with a pocket edition of Milton in his hands that he might study the character of Satan, and with something of Satanic pride, misery, and remorse in his heart. Retreat from men, however, was a greater punishment to Burns than to Byron, for the former was a sincere lover of his kind, and valued their love even more than their admiration. We find him in June this year in Galloway on a visit to Heron of Kerroughtree, along with David MacCulloch, who promised to accompany him there; and in Castle Douglas penning a melancholy letter to Mrs. Dunlop, and complaining of a flying gout. And here, positively for the last time, turns up the "unspeakable" Clarinda, to whom Burns, sitting like a solitary hermit in a solitary inn, with a solitary bottle of wine, wrote a characteristic letter. In it he proclaims his pride; he rejoices in her recovered health; tells her that he constantly gives her health, when asked for the toast of a married lady, as Mrs. Mac ——; and incloses as a *bonne bouche*, a "Monody on a Lady noted for her caprice"—his old flame and new foe, Maria Riddell.

He, John Syme, and young Maxwell the surgeon, held meetings of a quasi-seditious kind, with locked doors and bated breath, a few bold toasts, and free and easy songs. From these orgies, however, there issued nothing of consequence except some epigrams of little value in reply to others of none, and one rather spirited song, "The Tree of Liberty." In autumn he resumed his song writing, and as poets, according to "Festus," must have a lay figure, he found the inspiration of many a sweet and many a silly ditty in *Chloris*, the last of his many fancy-loves. Her real name was Jean Lorimer. She was the daughter of a substantial farmer a little way from Ellisland, nearer Dumfries, and also a tea and spirit dealer in Dumfries

* Glenriddell MS. See APPENDIX, No. v.

and Kemmis-hall. Burns first came in contact with him professionally as an exciseman, but was afterwards a great favourite and frequent visitor of the family. Once arriving unexpectedly, and entering by the back-way, he found Mrs. Lorimer busy making candles for her home use—they were then an exciseable commodity. He said simply, "Faith, Ma'am, ye 're thrang the nicht!" and passed in. Jean, her daughter, was a beautiful creature with fine flaxen hair and a handsome figure. A Mr. Gillespie—a brother exciseman settled in Dumfries—wooed her, being backed in this by Burns; but in vain. A splendid spendthrift called Whelpdale, from Cumberland, who had taken a farm near Moffat, got acquainted with Jean, then only eighteen years of age, proposed elopement to Gretna Green, threatening to hang or drown himself if she would not consent, gained his point, and they returned to Barnhill man and wife. Soon, however, his debts forced him to decamp, and she did not see him for twenty-three years! She returned to live with her parents, and it was then that Burns became intimate with her. Whether he really loved her, or not, cannot now be very accurately ascertained. It is certain that his wife was intimate with the Lorimers as well as he; but it is certain also that he wrote a great many verses, very sweet and tender, belauding her charms. The frequent visits he paid to her abode were in her unprotected state extremely imprudent, and no doubt his enemies would put the worst construction on them; but this perhaps he knew not, or if he did, treated it with contempt. Her after fate was tragical. Her father failed, and she had from poverty to become a governess, and continued so for years. Returning, in 1816, from a visit to her brother in Sunderland, she heard at Brampton that her husband had left the village only a few hours before she called. He was afterwards imprisoned for debt at Carlisle, and Jean went to see him. When they met she could hardly recognize him, till he cried out "Jean;" he was so changed, slightly paralytic, a mere wreck. They met only once afterwards, and then parted for ever. After this she fell gradually—committed a *faux pas*, became a mendicant, then got a situation as a housekeeper in Newington, and ultimately died in a humble lodging in Middleton's Entry, Potterrow, not far from "Clarinda's" house. This was in 1831. Her husband, who latterly lived in Langholm, survived her a few years. She never ceased to retain her elegance of form and the remains of beauty, nor to be proud of having been sung by Burns, as "Chloris," in eleven or twelve songs.

Nothing else of importance occurred in his history this year, which had gradually brightened a little around him, but a proposal from Mr. Miller, junior, of Dalswinton, and Perry of the *Morning Chronicle*, afterwards the patron of Hazlitt, and the generous friend of many literary men, that Burns should remove to London, and write regularly at a good annual stipend for the *Morning Chronicle*. This offer he declined. Was it a pity he did not accept it? There are here various opinions; and first, of his going to London. Had Burns been as young as his years, and had he acquired thorough self-control, this had been a desirable measure. London in 1794 had no man his superior in general mental power, except Fox or Burke; in poetical genius no rival at all, unless Cowper, who was nearly off the stage, and fated to write little more. Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth were yet in blossom. Godwin, Thomas Paine, Holcroft, and others were mainly political writers, although Godwin's "Caleb Williams" had just appeared. On the whole, although Peter Pindar, Sheridan, and Colman were the wits of the day, and very popular, there was ample field for Burns. He could have probably got into better society than in Scotland; and from the time of his death, and long afterwards, regrets were expressed that he had not been introduced among the more liberal yet refined society of England, where indeed peccadilloes and peculiarities might have had a large margin, but where, even then, there was a demand for greater regularly and decency of outward deportment and converse, although there were some men, like Sheridan, who set habitually both morals and decorum at defiance. But while they were chartered libertines, we doubt if Burns would instantly have obtained a similar privilege; we doubt, too, if he would have subsided easily into a hard-working literary man, and he would have been exposed besides to many temptations. Then his constitution was to some extent injured, and Nature had begun to signal through all his veins that she was angry with him and must soon call him to account. We fear his career in London would have been very short; seven or eight years before it might have been otherwise. As it was, and on the whole, he was wise in refusing to go to London; although he did not act with equal wisdom in refusing the pay which Perry so generously offered him for contributing regularly to the *Morning Chronicle*. This, in the first place, would have secured him a valuable addition to his income; secondly, given him work to do, the fact of which being paid for would have acted as a stimulus to do it well; and, thirdly, it would have created for him a much wider public, and would have probably procured more enthusiastic readers and more generous patrons.

One reason why Burns refused to go to London and bind himself down to be a regular contributor to Perry's journal was, that he began to entertain hopes of promotion in the Excise. Chambers is at pains to prove that Burns, by fines, &c., made up his income to nearly £90 per annum, a sum fully equivalent to £160 at present; that he often received presents of rum, oysters, game, &c.; that he had thus a good deal of roughness in his *ménage;* that his house was tolerably well furnished, with mahogany table,

&c.; that he had a maid-servant, and sat with his Jean in the parlour; that there was often very good society with him; that he liked to see his wife well dressed, and gave her the first gingham gown ever seen in Dumfries. Burns speaks, when the "Mousie" is accused of stealing from his corn, of "getting a blessing wi' the lave and never missing it." There were two worthy clergymen, long since dead, one of them specially known to us, who were conversing about their respective incomes: one of them had £300 a year and a vixen, quite a "Xantippe," for his wife; the other £50 with a kind, sunny, excellent spouse. "I have £300 a year," said Mr. C.; "how much, brother G., have you?" "£50 and a blessing" was the naïve reply. We fear the blessing (we do not, however, refer to Jean) was denied to Burns. Amidst comparative competence and comfort he was not happy, but restless, discontented, and too ready to seek solace in excesses, where it ought not to be sought, and cannot be found. Yet he began 1795 well. January brought with her as her "first foot" that noblest of his songs, "A Man 's a Man for a' that." It was the true "Psalm of Life," and at it, as at the blast of a trumpet, many of his spectres vanished. He says, in a preliminary letter to Thomson, "A great critic on songs (Dr. Aiken) says that love and wine are the exclusive themes for song-writing; the following is on neither subject, and is consequently no song." But Burns has selected here a nobler subject than either love or wine. It is manhood, and his poem, for it is rather a poem than a song, may be called the triumph or Apotheosis of Manhood. Shakspeare makes one of his characters define a man as a "forked radish," another, as a man made out of a "cheese-paring." Burns goes in opposition to such mean and disenchanting views of humanity on the one side, and to Daddy Auld's and Thomas Boston's dismal notions on the other. Burns glories in humanity *per se*, in its aboriginal elements. He is naked, and not ashamed. He believes (with all deductions) in the Divinity of human nature—in it, within and without, as the God-Man, of whom the Christ is the starry Head. And the God within us is propelling slowly but surely the coming time

> "When man to man the warld o'er
> Shall brithers be for a' that."

The sentiment and the song together form at once a burst of the clearest prophetic insight, an act of the noblest self-assertion, and a strain of the truest poetry, and are being fulfilled every moment in the advancing wisdom, the decreasing selfishness, the enlarging benevolence, and the approaching unity of Man.

Things otherwise began to mend. The political ferment subsided, and there was less danger of "raxed necks coming into fashion," as "Pate in Peril" says in "Redgauntlet." Burns' political sins, he says, were forgiven him. A coldness which had estranged him from Captain Hamilton of Allershaw, his landlord and warm friend, was terminated by a kind letter from him in acknowledgment of the receipt of three guineas Burns sent in part payment of rent. Mrs. Riddell and he were so far reconciled as to exchange songs, books, and literary courtesies, though in a formal "Mr. Burns to Mrs. Riddell" kind of way. All this shows that after an estrangement he and the Dumfries public were coming again to terms.

Acting as supervisor in lieu of another, Burns got snowed up at Ecclefechan in a storm, which seems to have been almost unparalleled in Scotland; houses being covered up to the second storey, and wreaths accumulated amid the Campsie hills to the depth of one hundred feet. His Correspondence contains a very laughable account of the poet's plight in what he calls the "wicked little village," a village closely connected with his own history—since Nicol, his ancient friend, Currie, his first biographer, and Carlyle, his most powerful panegyrist and advocate, were all born there.

We find next the bard in a position not much more creditable to him than when he drowned his snow-sprung sorrows in the flowing bowl at Ecclefechan—engaged in doing the squib work and letting fly the miserable crackers of a south-country election of the period. The death of General Stewart in January created a vacancy in the representation of Kirkcudbrightshire, in which two candidates presented themselves—Mr. Heron of Kerroughtree, an excellent man, and Mr. Gordon of Balmaghie, supported by Murray of Broughton and the influence of the Earl of Galloway. Burns mingled in the fray, moved more by dislike to John Bushby and the Earl of Galloway than by political feeling. Hence came his two ballads. From a letter he wrote to Heron along with them, it appears he had some hope of promotion, for which he asks his aid. He wishes to rise to the office of a collector, which implied more money—from £200 to £1000—and almost complete leisure. The first man in Scotland humbly confines his ambition to a life of literary leisure with a decent competency; and he hints very gently that perhaps Mr. Heron might help him toward this by his political influence. He might as soon have asked for his estate of Drumlanrig at once. Heron triumphed, and Burns wrote a third ironical ballad, entitled "John Bushby's Lamentation." In the second and third ballads he had attacked Muirhead, the minister of Urr, a man of ability and scholarship, who had been a wit about town in Edinburgh among the Gilbert Stuarts and Dr. John Browns of that day (some notices of him will be found in the Life of the great scholar, Dr. Alexander Murray, recently published); full of family pride, and fond of talking of his genealogical tree, and who had been sarcastically described by Burns—

> "Muirhead, as good as he 's true,"

And as one

"Whase haly priesthood nane can stain,
For wha can dye the black?"

Muirhead was not a man to sit silent under the attack of any one—not even of Burns. It was not uncommon for satirists, both in prose and verse, to take some passage from a classical author, and to found on it their attack, by translation or paraphrase more or less free. Camille Desmoulins, during the Reign of Terror, had based some of his most brilliant and scathing diatribes on Tacitus. Muirhead printed in Edinburgh a *brochure* founded on the following lines of Martial (*Martialis*, lib. ii. ep. 66):—

"Et delator es et calumniator,
Et fraudator es et negotiator,
Et fellator es et lanista: miror
Quave non habeas, Vacerras, nummos?"

Then followed a free translation—

"Vacerras, shabby son of w——,
Why do thy patrons keep thee poor?
Bribe-worthy service thou canst boast,
At once their bulwark and their post!
Thou art a sycophant, a traitor,
A liar, a calumniator,
Who conscience (hadst thou that) would sell,
Nay, lave the very sewer of hell
For whisky! Eke, most precious imp,
Thou art a rhymster, gauger, pimp.
Whence comes it then, Vacerras, that
Thou art as poor as a church rat?"

It is a very clever epigram, doubtless; and because its two severest words, "whisky" and "poor," were founded on fact, Burns felt it severely, and took his revenge afterwards in his "Excellent New Song"—

"Here's armorial bearings
From the manse of Urr;
The crest a sour crab apple,
Rotten at the core."

This shaft was aimed at Muirhead's weakness about his family, which was all right; but Burns had no business with his heart, never a fair mark, and from which the keenest arrow rebounds. Muirhead survived the poet twelve years (he died 1808, in the sixty-eighth year of his age and thirty-eighth of his ministry), long enough, we trust, to forgive Burns, and to regret his angry collision with him in his sad declining days.

In spite of such severities and their effect on the public mind, which is said to have been very great at the time, Burns was steadily rising from the low pitch which he had reached in 1794. Partly from his changed tone of mind, and partly as a popular stroke, he joined the volunteer corps which had been formed in Dumfries, and to which his friends, Maxwell and Syme, had from prudential motives annexed themselves. Some of the haughtier Tories tried to prevent Burns from joining this corps, on account of his former imprudences. But among them he appeared, and was seen by Allan Cunningham, then a boy, with his very swarthy face, his ploughman stoop, his large dark eye, and his indifferent dexterity in handling his arms. But while many could handle their arms better than Burns, none but he could write what he now wrote, "The Dumfries Volunteers," a song discovering the same genius, although with a fainter breath, which had fanned the banners of Bannockburn. But while people sang and shouted at this song in hundreds of Scottish villages, country sides, and many populous cities, all its author received for it was a reluctant pardon for his past offences from the Dumfries gentry, a permission to enter and continue among the volunteers, and to get *fou* as often as he could afford it in their ranks! A gentleman told a friend of ours that the only time he ever saw Burns was in Thornhill on a market day, lying in his full volunteer uniform, totally incapable, in the mud of the main street; no one taking the trouble to lift him up or cover him from the public gaze. Had Burns been a Frenchman on the Republican side, how different would have been his treatment! he would have given France another and a nobler Marseillaise Hymn to sing; and with what sympathetic music his strains would have accompanied the march of the Tricolor, forcing its terrible way to victory over heaps of dead, or floating over cities, forests, fields, and provinces on fire, or swaying dubiously above the tide of deep and desperate battle! Their Laureate would not have been left, nay, never would have fallen, in the mire. There never yet was a Tory Tyrtæus. Burns was essentially a Republican poet, and even in his song, "The Dumfries Volunteers," the old spirit comes out in the lines—

"But while we sing 'God save the King,'
We'll ne'er forget the People."

In the course of 1795 there was a renewal of a scheme which had been under consideration some years before—that of appointing Burns to a decent office in Leith, with easy duties and emoluments amounting to £200 a year. This was a project of Graham of Fintry; but, says Professor Walker, it was frustrated by the imprudence of the poet himself. We do not know whether he refers to any new special act or to his general character. No such arrangement, even if proposed again, was ever effected. Burns continued all the rest of the year to write songs for Thomson, to take his ease in the old Globe Inn, or to hold literary "symposia" with John Syme, a man of no ordinary abilities and of very social habits, a "No Song no Supper" person, who often entertained the poet at his house at Ryedale, beyond the Nith. He tells some story,

which Chambers tries to prove exaggerated, about Burns in an exalted mood drawing his sword-cane and threatening to kill Syme, till checked by his exclaiming "What! wilt thou thus, and in mine house?" and that the repentant poet in remorse dashed himself down on the floor. The "sword-cane" adds a romantic air to this story, and perhaps, more than anything else, has led to doubts as to its authenticity. Had it been a poker, men might have readily believed that one whose eyes, according to Syme, were "coals of living fire" in repose, might in his altitudes have threatened to knock him down therewith. Such things have happened in better regulated families than that of Ryedale. Burns did certainly wear a sword-cane, and, according to Chambers, touched it in his ire; but how does this merely touching it with his finger account for his thereafter dashing himself down on the ground in an agony of shame? We incline to believe that Syme was, in the main, accurate both in his account of Burns composing "Scots wha hae" on the moors of Galloway, and of his getting into a towering passion when his host began, in his own house and over his own wine, to act the Mentor to the irritable poet, by this time, doubtless, considerably excited; while Syme might perhaps, from the theatrical tone of his words, appear to his guest to bear a striking similitude to Satan reproving sin.

This year the graceless Duke of Queensberry, of whom Burns had previously written

> "How shall I sing Drumlanrig's Grace—
> Discarded remnant of a race
> Once great in martial story?
> His forbears' virtues all contrasted,
> The very name of Douglas blasted—
> His that inverted glory,"

capped his previous infamy by cutting down all his wood, fit for being sold, in Drumlanrig and Neidpath, to furnish a dowry for the Countess of Yarmouth, supposing her to be his daughter. (George Selwyn, the famous wit, also left this lucky lady a fortune under the impression that she was his! Truly a miscellaneous composition.) Burns, who had often occasion to pass that way, was of course indignant at the devastation, and wrote his famous verses on the destruction of the woods of Drumlanrig on the back of a window in a toll-house hard by. It is difficult to believe, looking at these woods now casting their solemn weight of shadow on the immemorial castle, that they had ever been touched by a sacrilegious hand; "but," says Dr. Ramage, in his interesting book on Drumlanrig and the Douglasses, "it will take a century to replace them." Wordsworth champions the cause of injured Neidpath, and aims at the devastator a smooth stone from the brook in the shape of a sonnet—

> "Degenerate Douglas! oh, unworthy lord,
> Whom mere despite of heart could so far please,
> And love of havoc (for with such disease
> Fame taxes him), that he could send forth word
> To level with the dust a noble horde,
> A brotherhood of venerable trees,
> Leaving an ancient dome and towers like these
> Beggared and outraged! Many hearts deplored
> The fate of these old trees; and oft with pain
> The traveller at this day will stop and gaze
> On wrongs which Nature scarcely seems to heed.
> For sheltered places bosoms, nooks, and bays,
> And the pure mountains, and the gentle Tweed,
> And the green silent pastures, still remain."

Burns flings a flake of that "wil'fire" of which he speaks—

> ("Was't *wi"fire* scorched their boughs?')—

to blast and scorch the Vandal.

> "The worm that gnawed my bonnie trees,
> That reptile wears a ducal crown."

In spite of the combined assaults of the two mighty poets, and the indignation of the public, William, Duke of Queensberry, sat down infamous and contented, and lived on till 1810, dying at the great age of eighty-five, without legitimate children, but bequeathing Drumlanrig estate to Henry, third Duke of Buccleuch.

Burns was now living in Dumfries a life very differently described by different observers, and of which it is difficult to form an accurate average estimate. On the one hand, he was not idle; but along with his various engagements, professional, domestic, and literary, was rather busy, although by no means hard wrought. He occasionally assisted his children in their lessons. He was generally *himself* in the forenoons. James Gray, the teacher, paints the poet's life in rose colours; but he was a simple, warm-hearted enthusiast, one of that class of hero-worshippers who can, in reference to their idols, see no iniquity in Jacob, and no perverseness in Israel. It is told that when the famous convivial and privileged eighteenth century divine, Dr. Webster, was reeling home one night or morning past the Tron Church, a gentleman met him and said, "Ah, Dr. Webster, what would the Whigs in St. Giles' say if they saw you in this state?" "Deed," quoth the Doctor, "they wadna *believe their ain een*." So, had Gray seen Burns ever so bad, he would not have believed his senses. This, at least, James Hogg avers of him; and Hogg knew Gray well. Mrs. Burns very naturally makes the best of it, and describes her husband as tolerably sober when he came home at night; and this was no doubt, as a rule, the case. Findlater, the supervisor, always speaks kindly and tenderly of him. On the other hand, to be perfectly candid, there were floating rumours of a very dark kind, and affecting his *morale* in other points besides drinking. It was broadly hinted that his society did no good to young men; and that young women,

too, had to avoid it or risk their character, and had to visit Mrs. Burns by stealth. Thomas Aird—one of the most virtuous and generous of men, who had lived forty years in the locality, who had even a pet fancy that no bitter assailant of Burns had ever come to a good end, and who in his Mount of Communion in the "Old Bachelor," has given a good poetic photograph of him—told us he knew stories about Burns he never would reveal, and often deplored that "raging animalism" which was the fountain of his errors and his misery. We are anxious to avoid all one-sidedness and all mere sermonizing on this matter; but we should remember, that while *Premat atra Nox* ("Let the deep night conceal these errors") is a noble charitable motto for such men as Aird and Wilson to use, it could not be expected to be that of Dumfries in Burns' day, or to be altogether that of his professed and honest biographer in ours. As we have repeatedly said and will say again, we believe Burns to have been a noble being in spite of his errors; but we believe his errors to have been very great, and that it is the part of a real biographer to admit this, and to register everything of importance in reference to such a man, that he believes true, even if against his hero, as did Boswell to Johnson (see what Boswell says of Johnson's moral errors in the close of his Life), while maintaining on the whole the worth of the character, and while drawing as an inference of broad application and most mournful truth, "Lord, what is Man!" and enforcing the lesson implied in the words of Burke, "to love all human-kind, and to fear ourselves." Chambers quotes Burns' words—

> "A towmond of trouble, should that be my fa',
> A night of guid fellowship southers it a'"—

as if this were Burns' sober and habitual estimate of the balance of existence. Robert Hall says justly "that the greatest sensualist would prefer a small addition to his fortune to the most exquisite repast," and Burns, unless in a moment of caprice or irritation, could never have believed in such a monstrous moral misproportion as is implied in these two lines. Over the sky of his strong judgment gusts of passion and clouds of sophistry were continually rushing, but ever behind them the clear stern azure was sure to arise in its calm immortality:—

> "It trembled, but it could not pass away."

In the Autumn of the year he lost his daughter, who, after a long illness, died at Mauchline. It was a heavy blow to his kind parental heart that he could not leave his duties and attend her to the grave. His own health was now beginning to break down. A person called on him in the spring of 1795 and found him ailing, and exclaiming, as he rubbed his shoulders, "I am beginning to feel as if I were soon to be an old man." Byron was still younger when he said, "I am beginning to have a dreary sort of old feel about me." A year before he had spoken to Mrs. Dunlop of a flying gout as inflicting punishment on him for the sins of his youth. To these forebodings of his fate his own folly possibly added that accidental complaint which Currie speaks of as confining him from October, 1795, to January, 1796. The confinement and regimen could not indeed have been very strict, since we find him spending a night in November in an inn with Professor Walker.

"Circumstances," says the professor, "having at that time led me to Scotland, after an absence of eight years, during which my intercourse with Burns had been almost suspended, I felt myself strongly prompted to visit him. For this purpose I went to Dumfries, and called upon him early in the forenoon. I found him in a small house of one storey. He was sitting on a window-seat reading, with the doors open, and the family arrangements going on in his presence, and altogether without that appearance of snugness which a student requires. After conversing with him for some time he proposed a walk, and promised to conduct me through some of his favourite haunts. We accordingly quitted the town, and wandered a considerable way up the beautiful banks of the Nith. Here he gave me an account of his latest productions, and repeated some satirical ballads which he had composed to favour one of the candidates at the last borough election. . . . He repeated also his fragment of an 'Ode to Liberty' with marked and peculiar energy, and showed a disposition, which, however, was easily repressed, to throw out peculiar remarks, of the same nature with those for which he had been reprehended. On finishing our walk he passed some time with me at the inn, and I left him early in the evening to make another visit at some distance from Dumfries.

"On the second morning after," continues the professor, "I returned with a friend who was acquainted with the poet, and we found him ready to pass a part of the day with us at the inn. On this occasion I did not think him quite so interesting as he had appeared at his outset. His conversation was too elaborate, and his expression weakened by a frequent endeavour to give it artificial strength. He had been accustomed to speak for applause in the circles which he frequented, and seemed to think it necessary, in making the most common remark, to depart a little from the ordinary simplicity of language, and to couch it in something of epigrammatic point. In his praise and censure he was so decisive as to render a dissent from his judgment difficult to be reconciled with the laws of good-breeding. His wit was not more licentious than is unhappily too venial in higher circles, though I thought him rather unnecessarily free in the avowal of his excesses. Such were the clouds by which the pleasures of the evening were partially obscured, but frequent coruscations

of genius were visible between them. When it began to grow late he showed no disposition to retire, but called for fresh supplies of liquor with a freedom which might be excusable, as we were in an inn and no condition had been distinctly made, though it might easily have been inferred, had the inference been welcome, that he was to consider himself as our guest; nor was it till he saw us worn out that he departed, about three in the morning. . . . . Upon the whole, I found this last interview not quite so gratifying as I had expected; although I had discovered in his conduct no errors which I had not seen in men who stand high in the favour of society, or sufficient to account for the mysterious insinuations which I had heard against his character. He on this occasion drank freely without being intoxicated, a circumstance from which I concluded, not only that his constitution was still unbroken, but that he was not addicted to solitary cordials; for if he had tasted liquor in the morning, he must have easily yielded to the excess of the evening."

Professor Wilson has commented severely on Walker's narrative, and it has certainly a petty, patronizing air. But our readers should recall to mind who and what Walker was, and his relation to Burns: he was a violent Tory, while Burns had but recently escaped from the suspicion of Jacobinism. He was a man of a formal and finical cast of mind. It was almost a risk in him—looking forward as he did to promotion in the Revenue service, a promotion he ultimately got in the Custom House of Perth—to visit and spend an evening with such a tabooed character as Burns. And then he could not be expected to look at the shabby-seeming, deboshed ganger, throwing out political inuendoes, quoting bitter pasquinades, and calling for fresh supplies of liquor at three in the morning, with the same eyes as eight years before when he saw him lying entranced on the mossy couches of the Tilt, or sharing in the refined hospitalities of Blair Castle; or with the same eyes as Christopher North, writing in the year 1841, when the grief and guilt were both past, and the glory remained. There cannot be a doubt that a certain degree of degradation came across this great spirit in these latter years. This we gathered from the late amiable and child-like Dr. Wightman of Kirkmahoe, a man of a very different type from Josiah Walker, equally sincere, and far more enthusiastic. He told us that when he knew Burns he had become desperate and at bay, and it was a great affliction to be in his company. His talk was fierce, lurid, too often loose, profane, and unhappy. The noble vessel, as we would put it, had got on fire; its guns were going off, and it became positively dangerous to approach it. This Dr. Wightman said infinitely more in sorrow than in anger. It was corroborated by the statement, or rather by the silence, of another gentleman in Dumfries, a Mr. Thorburn, who had also met Burns, and who, while saying very little, gave us the same impression. This applied more to the years 1794 and 1795 than to his closing days, in which there were occasional indications of a great though fitful amelioration. Our readers are invited to compare such statements, for which this biographer vouches, with the picture of Burns' private manners Chambers has given, from the pen of Mr. Pattison of Kelvin Grove (Chambers, vol. iv. p. 173), which is exceedingly charming, and though no doubt coloured a little by a boy's vivid fancy, is in the main, we believe, true. Never, save in Shakspeare, was there volatility like that of Burns. Shakspeare could in an incredibly short time create a "Hamlet," a "Prospero," a "Falstaff," and a "Sir Toby Belch." Burns could be a "Lord Glencairn," a "Robert Ainslie," a "Smellie," a "John Rankine," or a "tinkler caird" in the course of twenty-four hours.

Ere this year closed Burns favoured the young actress, Miss Fontenelle, with an Address for her benefit night; wrote Collector Mitchell a rhyming epistle soliciting the loan of a guinea, and hinting that he had narrowly escaped death; and when, in a Reign of Terror which came upon Scotland, Henry Erskine was beat by the Lord Advocate as candidate for the position of Dean of Faculty, poured out the vexation of his heart, which was that of the community at large, in a copy of truculent and not over-decent verses yeleped the "Dean of Faculty." It was under this mortification that honest Henry went at night and hewed off with an axe the brass plate on his door which bore the lost title. But his chagrin soon gave way, and he retired to the country; and when found one day busy in a potato field, and a gentleman said to him, "So you are enjoying *otium cum dignitate*," replied, "Yes, *diggin a taty*." It would be long ere Pious Bob (as Burns nicknames the Lord Advocate) forgave the poet.

In January, 1796, the last January Burns was ever to see, he committed a great imprudence, which was punished as just but remorseless Nature punishes all such offences. The story told by Currie and Chambers is, that Burns tarried to a very late or early hour in the Globe Tavern, drank too much, fell asleep on his way home in the snow; and that, owing to the particular condition to which the use of a severe medicine had reduced his body, a fatal chill penetrated his bones, and was succeeded by a rheumatic fever from which he never thoroughly recovered. We add another version of the story communicated to us by the late Dr. William Anderson of Glasgow, a man whose probity was as conspicuous as his genius. He said that Burns went from the Globe Tavern to a house of ill fame, and there behaved so disgracefully, being of course intoxicated, that he was spurned out, and fell on a hedge opposite the door. The ground was covered with snow; and when he awoke and went home, he found the fatal chill and the accidental disease to boot. To this version of the

story, which Dr. Anderson firmly believed, and which he appeared to have on good authority, our chief objection is that it contradicts Currie, who makes the accidental disease precede, not succeed, that fatal visit to the Globe. We therefore have doubts of its truth, and even were it true it would not materially alter our opinion of Burns; it would not increase our surprise, though it might deepen our sorrow. It was not Burns who left the Globe that night, and who probably had no consciousness of what befell; it was a blind-besotted vassal of an infernal will! But it was Burns, alas! who awoke and experienced horrors such as few but he have ever felt in their dread and disgraceful complexity. Burns received in himself the reward of his error which was meet, and let us trust, forgiveness afterwards from the Father who will by no means clear the guilty and remorseless, but accepts the penitent child.

Chambers says it was not the pressure of poverty, or disrepute, or wounded feelings, or a broken heart, in which lay the determining cause of the sadly shortened days of our great national poet. All true; but no doubt these combined with this unfortunate accident in bringing him to an untimely grave. It was only a complication of calamities, some sapping within, others assaulting from without, which could, at such an early age and in such a short time, have destroyed the great soul and powerful body of Burns. All these united in his ruin, and there was fatality besides :—

> "It was that fatal and perfidious bark,
> Built in the Eclipse and rigged with curses dark,
> That laid so low that sacred head of thine!"

From his melancholy bed Burns rose on the 28th January, and attended a Mason Lodge meeting, and recommended for entry as an apprentice Mr. James Georgeson, a Liverpool merchant. He wrote an unhappy letter to Mrs. Dunlop, deploring his situation and her silence. He tottered out sometimes to the street, where one day meeting his old neighbour, Mrs. Haugh, after a long talk about his state of health, he parted with the words, "I find that a man may live like a fool, but he will scarcely die like one." His commander in the volunteers—Colonel De Peyster, a remarkable man, who had served in Canada, borne the Royal Commission for eighty years, resumed in Dumfries, where he retired, the command of a troop (we figure him another Syme or Timothy Tickler of the "Noctes"—seven feet high, straight as a statue, his cheek a rose, his hair a snow-drift, his bearing that of one of Nature's noblest chivalry), and who died in his ninety-seventh year—was one of Burns' staunchest friends, sent some kind inquiries in reference to his health, and received from the poet a characteristic epistle, showing the old Adam, which was in his case the love of wine and woman, reporting itself in the midst of "bolus, pills, and potion glasses"—the ruling passion surging up strong in the very jaws of Death! On the 3rd January he had indited his lamentable epistle to Mrs. Dunlop; in February (probably one of the first days of it) he wrote for Thomson the lively song, "Hey for a lass wi' a tocher!" Currie describes his state as most deplorable :—"His appetite now began to fail, his hand shook, and his heart faltered on any exertion or emotion. His pulse became weaker and more rapid, and pain in the larger joints and in the hands and feet deprived him of the enjoyment of refreshing sleep. Too much dejected in his spirits, and too well aware of his real situation to entertain hopes of recovery, he was ever musing on the approaching desolation of his family, and his spirits sank into a uniform gloom." The last clause is hardly true. His spirits might be artificial, but he *was* in spirits when he wrote that knowing, knavish, lively ditty, "Hey for a lass," &c. Burns had taken the part of Mr. James Clarke, who had been schoolmaster in Moffat, when unjustly accused of undue severity to his boys. They had had, he says, "many a merry squeeze together," and Burns had lent him money. Clarke *was* now reported to be prosperous in Forfar as a teacher; and the poet was driven by the excessive badness of the times—the dearth of oatmeal keeping the lower orders on the brink of rebellion—and the increased expenses of his establishment, produced by his illness, to apply to him for his own. Clarke inclosed £1 in a very sympathetic letter, explaining why he could not send more till afterwards—a letter which perhaps did Burns more momentary good than £10 would have done. Moving one day through the street—the reality at thirty-seven of his own picture of old age, when it comes

> "Hoasting, hirpling o'er the field"—

he met Miss Grace Aiken, a young daughter of his old friend, Robert Aiken. She knew him not till he spoke; then she prest him to go with her to Mrs. Copland's, where she was staying; and they spent a quiet, pleasant evening in that highly respectable and hospitable house, the subject being, doubtless, Ayr, Ayr, Ayr, all the time. Chambers thinks Mrs. Copland's welcoming Burns a proof that the Respectables of Dumfries were now ready to receive him into their dwellings. Alas! what family so callous and cruel as to have refused the poet admission now, with his hollow cheek, crinkling cough, stammering step, eyes burning bright, like gems set in the head of his own "Death?" Surely every house in Dumfries, we think, would then, when too late, have been thrown open to him. Chambers says "the provincial clergy had forsaken him to a man," nor do we hear of them returning when he needed their help. Perhaps they had not forgiven his

"Three priests' hearts, rotten, black as muck,
Lay stinking, vile, in every neuk."

He was none of their charge. Burns had latterly attached himself as a hearer to a Secession meeting-house, where then preached a Mr. Inglis, who, according to the poet, believed what he said and practised what he preached. Of him we have ascertained only that he laboured in the congregation of Loreburn Street for forty-two years, died in 1826 in his eighty-fifth year, and hailed from Leslie, in Fife. He was succeeded by Mr. Clyde, father of the accomplished Dr. Clyde of the High School, Edinburgh, and he by our excellent friend, Rev. David Scott. We may here mention that Dr. Ferrier of Paisley, one of the most eloquent and able ministers of the Secession body, used to tell that he once encountered Burns in an inn. They began to dispute on the subject of promiscuous dancing, and took different sides. Both were powerful talkers; but Ferrier, who knew Burns, at last levelled him by quoting his words from the "Holy Fair"—"As you have said, sir,

"Mony jobs that day begin
May end in houghmagandie
Some ither day."

Burns felt the home-blow, laughed heartily, and they became for the rest of the evening the best of friends.

But now the poet was manifestly going down, and that in the sight of a Scotland which had received him as it had never received a poet before nor has since. His works were read in every hamlet, and his songs sung in every cottage; and he was dying, poor, neglected, and miserable. Partly, of course, the fault was his own. Nor was his case so well known as it would become now in a single week. We think, however, it was better known than is generally suspected; but he had far less sympathy than he ought to have had. Many would have been kind to him had he crossed their path, and welcomed even a visit from him; but they did not go out of their way to seek him. There was now no nobleman, as Lord Craig says of Michael Bruce, to come to his dwelling, and bid him be happy. Mrs. Dunlop at last became cold and silent, and her silence, we believe, was never explained to the poet before death, although Currie says it was; to his family after it she was eminently kind. Now it is remarkable, and has not, we think, been noticed before, that in his letters to her he was no hypocrite, but spoke out sometimes as frankly about his errors as to any of his correspondents.

May at last arrived, a May for once worthy of its old fame and of Buchanan's exquisite Ode on the 1st of May; but, alas! Burns might exclaim with Bruce—

"Now Spring returns, but not to me returns
The vernal joy my better years have known."

The breeze blew around his faded form and hollow features, flattering him with hopes which it was unable to fulfil. His pay is not to be materially reduced, but he receives no satisfactory assurance to the contrary; and this, of course, adds to his misery. His family had made him, as he says, a broadened mark for misfortune; and Misfortune's motto was, Spare no arrows. The duties necessary for receiving his pittance of pay were performed by one Stobie, a young expectant for Excise promotion; to his name be everlasting honour! for he who did a little could and would, if necessary, have done more. Findlater defends the Board by saying that Burns was no worse treated than others in similar circumstances, of which apology let us only say—

"Come, then, expressive Silence, muse its praise!"

Still the old poet and lover's spirit was in him, would not be subdued, and burst out in a song called "Jessie"—a song as sweet as if inspired by real passion, although it could only have been deep respect and gratitude which were rising in his bosom as he wrote. The object was Jessie Lewars, sister of his brother exciseman, and one altogether worthy of ministering to the later hours of a Burns. Seemed she not, while bending over his bed, though he was a sinful man,

"Like an angel o'er the dying
Who die in righteousness?"

And it was fine to see Burns sitting, weary and wasted like a ghost, at this young lady's piano, and at her request composing better verses to a favourite tune—

"Oh, wert thou in the cauld blast,
On yonder lea, on yonder lea?"

words which were afterwards set to music by Felix Mendelssohn. And was there ever compliment paid to woman more delicately beautiful, worth hecatombs of flattery, than in the words—"Jessy,"

"Although thou maun never be mine,
Although even hope is denied:
'Tis sweeter for thee despairing,
Than aught in the world beside—Jessy!"

And he covered goblets and sheets of paper with similar poetic expressions of regard and gratitude, all rose-edged, as he thought compliments to ladies should ever be, with the language of love. He predicted her matrimonial felicity. One of her swains, Bob Spalding, "had not as much brains as a midge could lean its elbow on—James Thomson is to be the man." And it was so. She became a happy wife, a resigned and industrious widow; and the blessing of Burns never forsook her in life, and still pursues her memory.

He lifted up for the last time his satirical pen, and

wrote an "Excellent New Song" in favour of Heron, who was standing again for Parliament to represent Kirkcudbright. Burns did not live to see his triumph. In this song he had a parting blow at his old enemy, Muirhead of Urr. As the 4th of June approached, Mrs. Walter Riddell, who must have been ignorant of the real state of his health, wrote him urging him to come to a birthday assembly to show his loyalty, and seeking from him the copy of a song he had newly composed; and he replied in a most melancholy tone, asking her in turn for the song, "Let us all be Unhappy Together." Seven weeks after he wrote again to Clarke in Forfar, craving, how reluctantly! another instalment of the debt due him, and owning that the thought of his widow and little ones made him "weak as a woman's tear." And on the 4th July, ere he started for the Brow, he wrote to Johnson humbly begging, in his wife's name, a spare copy of the "Scots Musical Museum" to present to a young lady—probably Jessie Lewars.

To the Brow, on the Solway, ten miles from Dumfries, he went in search of health. We passed it in 1843 in the company of Thomas Aird, Dr. John Carlyle, Dr. Browne of the Crichton Asylum, and there was a brother of Tennyson's among the party. The memory of poor Burns imposed the silence of sorrow on us all as the omnibus, in which we had been visiting Caerlaverock Castle, drove through. The Brow was then a little village; in Burns' day it consisted of only a few houses. The principal was a small inn, kept by a Mr. Davidson, who gave the "chaumer end" of his hostelry to Burns as a lodging. There was a chalybeate spring near. The Brow was then a station between Carlisle and Dumfries, past which great herds of cattle were often pouring southwards, their drovers (like Robin Oig and Henry Wakefield) finding a home in the *hospitium*, and perhaps, in their cups and quarrels, disturbing the bard's equanimity and repose. But near him was the Solway, and to its side he would repair for solitude, if not solace. He might there have written as sweet a poem as Shelley's "Stanzas written in dejection at Naples," although the skies here were less blue and the foam of the ocean less bright—

> "Like light dissolved in star showers thrown."

But here assuredly he might feel the wish

> "To lie down like a tired child
> And weep away this life of care."

He had one comfort, however, beyond the noble Alastor, who could not believe the Bible. Burns could, although he might not credit all that Daddy Auld and others found in it, or thought they found. But he had taken an old pocket Bible with him from Dumfries, and spent much of his time, it is said, in reading, and we can guess what he would read in its blessed pages.

Davidson was kind to Burns; but the only two viands he could swallow were *parritch* and port wine. The former was easily procured, but the latter was not found in the Brow cellar; and one day the Poet of Scotland might be seen walking with great difficulty—many gasps and rests — carrying in his hand an empty bottle, a mile away to Clarencefield, to see if John Burney, who kept an inn there and was married to a daughter of Davidson's, had not some for sale. He asked for a bottle of port wine, placing the empty bottle on the counter, but whispering to Burney that the muckle Deil had got into his pouch, and proffering his favourite *seal* in pledge (see it described in General Correspondence in a letter to Cunningham, March, 1793). The landlady, as Burns was unfastening the seal from the watch, stamped indignantly on the floor; and the husband, taking the poet into his arms, and giving him the wine, pushed him gently out of the door, and ended abruptly this scene of pain and shame, weeping, it is said, as he did so.

Mr. MacDougall, who tells the story very plaintively in his pleasing little work on "Burns in Dumfriesshire," intimates his belief that Burns might easily have got port wine by a word to Mrs. Riddell or any of his great friends in Dumfries, of whom he had still a few. But Burns was too proud to beg, especially in such a matter as this. He was not like a character described by Wilson in his famous lecture on the Miser, who, when the reckoning was being called for, shammed drunk, and kept his hand on his purse. Burns' motto was usually, "I pay for all." He would have sacrificed a shopful of seals rather than have borrowed a penny to discharge his *lawing*. The depths of poverty only revealed in him new pride; and if this was a fault it was a fault quite inseparable from his character—it was a bit of the genuine Burns. Mrs. Walter Riddell was in the neighbourhood, and hearing of Burns being at the Brow, invited him to dinner, and sent her carriage for him. "I was struck," says this lady in a confidential letter to a friend written soon after, "with his appearance on entering the room. The stamp of death was imprinted on his features. He seemed already touching the brink of eternity. His first salutation was: 'Well, madam, have you any commands for the other world?' I replied, that it seemed a doubtful case which of us should be there soonest, and that I hoped he would yet live to write my epitaph.* He looked in my face with an air of great kindness, and expressed his concern at seeing me look so ill, with his accustomed sensibility. At table he ate little or nothing, and he complained of having entirely lost the tone of his stomach. We had a long and

* Mrs. Riddell became a widow about the close of the eighteenth century. She removed to London, and married an Irish gentleman about Court, named Fletcher, and died in State Apartments at Hampton Court in 1820.

serious conversation about his present situation, and the approaching termination of all his earthly prospects. He spoke of his death without any of the ostentation of philosophy, but with firmness as well as feeling, as an event likely to happen very soon, and which gave him concern chiefly from leaving his four children so young and unprotected, and his wife in so interesting a situation —in hourly expectation of lying in of a fifth. He mentioned, with seeming pride and satisfaction, the promising genius of his eldest son, and the flattering marks of approbation he had received from his teachers, and dwelt particularly on his hopes of that boy's future conduct and merit. His anxiety for his family seemed to hang heavy upon him, and the more perhaps from the reflection, that he had not done them all the justice he was so well qualified to do. Passing from this subject, he showed great concern about the care of his literary fame, and particularly the publication of his posthumous works. He said he was well aware that his death would occasion some noise, and that every scrap of his writing would be revived against him to the injury of his future reputation: that letters and verses written with unguarded and improper freedom, and which he earnestly wished to have buried in oblivion, would be handed about by idle vanity or malevolence, when no dread of his resentment would restrain them, or prevent the censures of shrill-tongued malice, or the insidious sarcasms of envy, from pouring forth all their venom to blast his fame.

"He lamented that he had written many epigrams on persons against whom he entertained no enmity, and whose characters he should be sorry to wound; and many indifferent poetical pieces, which he feared would now, with all their imperfections on their head, be thrust upon the world. On this account he deeply regretted having deferred to put his papers in a state of arrangement, as he was now quite incapable of the exertion. . . . . The conversation," she adds, "was kept up with great evenness and animation on his side. I had seldom seen his mind greater or more collected. There was frequently a considerable degree of vivacity in his sallies, and they would probably have had a greater share, had not the concern and dejection I could not disguise damped the spirit of pleasantry he seemed not unwilling to indulge."

Burns took tea one night at Mr. Craig's, the parish minister. His daughter, Agnes Craig, "Clarinda's" namesake, was an accomplished young lady (married afterwards to Henry Duncan, the well-known minister of Ruthwell, the originator of saving banks, and author, besides other works, of three novels once popular — the "Cottager's Fireside," the "Young South Country Weaver," and "William Douglas, or the Scottish Exile"). She took an uncommon interest in the Poet, was amused when he described himself to her as a poor plucked pigeon; and when the setting sun was shining in upon him too strongly, and she hastened to take down the blind, he cried out, "Let the sun shine in on us, my dear young lady; he has not now long to shine on me!" This story has been told of him and Jessie Lewars, when still nearer his end, at Dumfries, and the lines are attributed to him (our informant is Mr. David Clarke, Thornhill, an enthusiastic admirer of our poet)—

"Draw up the curtain, Jessie,
And lift my head a wee;
And let the bonnie setting sun
Shine in on you and me!"

Thus Roussean desired to be lifted up in his bed, that he might look once more at the skies. Thus Mirabeau, beholding the sun in the spring heaven from his dying couch, said, "If he be not God, he is his cousin german!" All Sons of the Morning love the sun, rising, shining, and setting in glory.

Burns, it is said, had slightly improved at the Brow. Through sea bathing his pains were lessened, though his appetite did not get better. He made one effort more to re-string his lyre. Some link of association, it might be the power of contrast, brought back to him, as he wandered along the Solway, the recollection of that happiest day of his life which he spent at the Caldron Linn; and he was impelled to enshrine the sweet sad memory of Charlotte Hamilton in the song, "Fairest Maid on Devon Banks." He speaks, as alluded to before, of her "frown" as if some jar had broken in recently on their friendship. But he anticipates seeing her angelic smile again; perhaps he means beyond the gulf of death. And thus closed the minstrelsy of the Sweet Singer of Scotland—charmingly, characteristically, and for ever. On the altar of Woman, his life-long goddess, he threw this last grain of incense with faltering hand, and then turned him to matters more severe, solemn, and imperiously pressing.

Amidst his meditations and preparations for the Great Future which was near, he is recalled rudely to the cares of this world. A letter is handed in to him, and he knows instantly, with sure presentiment, that it is from a dun. We see his hand trembling as he with difficulty breaks the seal. It is a letter from Mr. Matthew Penn, a solicitor in Dumfries, seeking payment of a bill due to one Williamson, draper, of £7 9*s*., for his volunteer uniform. It contained no threat, and had Burns been strong he would have felt it little; but as it was, it shook him soul and body, and he wrote two letters, one to James Burnes of Montrose, seeking £10, and the other to George Thomson, seeking £5. Both were instantly responded to; but the shock had been given, and he trembled less at a grave than at the horrors of a jail.

On the 18th of July he returned to Dumfries in a spring cart, which stopped at the foot of the Millhole Brae.

When alighted he trembled like an aspen leaf, and tottered with difficulty into his own house. He was laid in the room on the south, on the second floor. A tremor, says Dr. Currie, pervaded his whole frame; his tongue was parched, and his mind sunk into delirium when not roused by conversation. According to Dr. Carruthers of Inverness, who derived his information from Maxwell, the case was the most painful and complicated one the physician ever attended, partly through Burns' inability to control himself, and allow the regimen and medicines fair play. This, however, might refer to him before he went to the Brow. On the day he arrived he penned his last letter to his father-in-law. Such a letter from Burns! It resembles an epistle from the dead to the dead—beginning, "My dear Sir," and ending, "Your son-in-law." Alas! the feud had never been made up, and Burns in this dread hour durst not simulate affection he could not feel. He must now be permitted to die in peace. His four little boys were sent to Leuchars' house. Findlater, who previously forwarded him £5, came occasionally to soothe his last hours. Jessie Lewars often moistened his lips, and ministered to his other necessities, now numbered, and would be rewarded by a pressure of the hand, and a look of gratitude from those eyes of flame soon to soften into the dimness of death. Jean was in bed, owing to her peculiar condition; but she rose ever and anon and stole over to look at her expiring lord. One of the corps of Volunteers called, and the last spark of Burns' matchless humour leaps to his eye as he says, "Don't let the awkward squad fire over me."

The sun of July 21 has risen and kindled his beacon-red on the top of Criffel, and the bright serpent of the Nith has uncoiled in his beams, while all unconscious of the summer day the Poet is lying in deep delirium. His children are now brought in to see their Sire ere he depart. Look at him as he tosses and writhes! Is that poor pallid being, livid with long confinement, unshaven, worn to a skeleton, with black masses of hair prematurely tinged with gray, with frenzy in his gestures and fever in his eye—is that the Boy-poet of Doon; the Star of Edinburgh; the inspired author of the "Cottar's Saturday Night;" the Rhapsodist and Dramatist; the Homer and Shakspeare of Scotland? Even so. He has been hitherto silent; but now he speaks, and his last word reveals his last thought. And of whom is his last thought? Is it of his long-lost and deeply-loved father? of his patron, in whose grave his heart is lying, Glencairn? of the wife of his bosom, soon to be again a mother and a widow? of one of his many loves, the Mary of his youth? the star-like Miss Burnet? the lovely Charlotte Hamilton? his admired and adoring "Clarinda?" No, it is of the mean haberdasher who has threatened him with a jail; and the last word of this Bard of Humanity is that of the last stern prophet of Israel—Malachi—a curse! But now he swallows a cup of medicine which had been put into his hands, and throwing out his arms, as if he were plunging into an ocean visible to him alone, he falls forward from the top to the bottom of the bed, and—

"He is gone!
It once was Lara that thou look'st upon."

Conceive the wild wail of sorrow that breaks out in the chamber—the poor children crying as if they would weep out their very hearts, and the low sob of his wife, and see amidst all this, serene and silent as a spirit, Jessie Lewars approaches the bed and shuts

"The Poet's ardent eyes."—(*Roscoe*).

Scarcely was he cold when the pent-in sorrow, first of Dumfries, then of Scotland, then of the world, burst out like a sea. Since to *him*, at least, "it could do no good on earth," it came forth the more speedily and the more generally. Had it been an instant sooner—had it but given one gleam of hope to pierce the dim haze of delirium which wrapt the dying Poet—it had been out of this world's way, it had been something like a sin. He *must* die in utter darkness as to the future of his wife and children. Was this a just Nemesis persecuting him to the last gasp? We hardly think it was. But he had a glimpse in his own prophetic soul some time before, when he told Jean he believed that, in a hundred years, he and she would be more *respeckit* than now. How characteristically Scotch and *Burnsian* was the word "respeckit"—*respeckit like the lave*—not applauded, dosed in his dust with flattery, but "respeckit." This is what every Scotch heart loves when it comes, desiderates when it does not. "He was weel respeckit" is still the warmest encomium an honest Scotchman can pronounce over the grave of a good and honourable brother man. Dumfries had now, as her first duty, to bury him; and with true, though belated sympathy, she performed the task, and in a good spirit. He had sung, "For man is a sodger, and life 's but a faucht;" and surely he had been a brave, if hapless, soldier himself. Carlyle says, "Edward Irving fell, if not victorious, yet unconquerable." But poor Burns was a beaten man, though vigorous and gigantic had been his struggle; and he now lay low, but mighty still. He deserved, at all events, military honours, and he was buried with them. The Volunteers, of which corps he was a member, the Fencible Infantry of Angusshire, and the regiment of cavalry of the Cinque Ports, offered their assistance. On the evening of the 25th July his remains were carried to the Town Hall, and on the following day—a party of the Volunteers in front with their arms reversed, the main body behind supporting the coffin, on which Burns' hat and sword were laid; behind, a numerous body of attendants, and the Fencible Regiment lining the streets—the funeral procession moved along to the South-

ern Churchyard to the sublime music of the Dead March in "Saul:" and arrived there, three volleys (*straggling*, as the dying Poet anticipated, and as Allan Cunningham, who was present, observed) attested Burns' wedding with the grave, and the arrival of—

> "The long, long silence, and the wormy shroud,
> And the *Amen* carved on the lonely tomb."

Nineteen years afterwards, at the instance of Mr. William Grierson of Boatford, who wrote a graphic sketch of the poet's interment (the enthusiastic father of an equally enthusiastic and indefatigable son, Dr. Grierson of Thornhill, an eminent antiquarian, and who has collected a great number of relics of Burns, some of which he has kindly furnished to us *), a movement for a monument began; and when the present mausoleum was finished, the corpse of the Poet was raised on the 16th September, 1815, and found in admirable preservation—the hair still abundant, the teeth firm and white; but when a shell or case was inserted below the coffin, the head separated from the trunk, and the whole body, with the exception of the bones, crumbled into dust, which was carefully collected and placed in a new coffin, and laid beside his two boys, Maxwell and Francis Wallace, who were also buried there. The mausoleum is an elegant Grecian temple, designed by Mr. T. F. Hunt of London, adorned within by a mural sculpture by an Italian artist, Turnerelli, representing his own ideal of "Coila" finding her Poet at the plough, and casting her inspiring mantle over him. Many eminent citizens of Dumfries are buried in the same cemetery with Burns; but the one approaching him most closely in genius is unquestionably Thomas Aird, who was laid in that God's acre on the 1st of May, 1876—a man of as true and original, if less varied, powerful, and popular genius, utterly free from Burns' errors, but possessing a heart as warm, and a simplicity and sincerity of character proclaiming the author of the "Devil's Dream on Mount Acksbech" and of the "Old Bachelor in the Old Scottish Village" not unworthy as a poet, and more than worthy as a man, to repose near the author of the "Vision" and the "Cottar's Saturday Night."

Scotland, England, and the world almost simultaneously proceeded to do justice to Burns' memory. Appeals were made by Lewars and Syme for the pecuniary relief of his family, and not in vain. He had, to his infinite credit, left only a little debt—not more than £30. But even this was a burden too heavy for his family to bear, and James Burnes, George Thomson, and Gilbert Burns all made efforts in different ways to clear it off. Syme, Maxwell his physician, and Alexander Cunningham of Edinburgh commenced a subscription, and projected an edition of his works and life. After some hesitation as to the choice of a biographer—Dugald Stewart being first thought of, then Mrs. Walter Riddell, and then John Syme—Dr. James Currie of Liverpool, an accomplished and warm-hearted man, was selected for the task. The subscription went on slowly. Subscriptions even for the most proper and popular objects are often failures from sheer want of pushing. The mass are usually quite passive, and the impulse to continue, as well as the initiative to start, must come from a few individuals. Sometimes one fashionable name determines the fate of a testimonial or subscription. This for Burns at the end of a year did not amount to more than £700. The Life was more successful. Dr. Currie got into his hands, though in a confused state, a mass of valuable material, including the Thomson Correspondence, which that gentleman generously gave up to him. The book was published by subscription. It appeared in May, 1800, was received with universal approbation, and realized about £1400 to the family. Mrs. Burns was now in comfortable circumstances, and continued to live in her husband's house. It may be mentioned here that on the morning of the poet's funeral she was taken with the pains of labour, and about the time that he was being committed to the dust his posthumous child was ushered into the world—"Every moment dies a man, every moment one is born." The child was called Maxwell, after Burns' kind and skilful physician, but did not long survive. A curious story is told that Mrs. Burns, shortly after his birth, had a dream that her husband appeared at her bedside, and said he had been permitted to return to behold his child—looked in at the mother and child, and then vanished. This probably arose in Jean's mind from her regret that he had not lived to see this Benoni, the Son of Sorrow; but it might be a true rendering of his yearning even in the world of spirits for a sight of his own babe, born in circumstances so intensely peculiar and painful. Jean lived in Dumfries much respected till March, 1834, when she died, and was buried beside her husband. It was then that a cast of the poet's skull for a phrenological purpose was taken by Bailie Frazer, and submitted to Mr. George Combe, who passed over it a characteristic and oracular verdict, asserting very truly that if Burns had been a nobleman, liberally educated, and employed in pursuits suited to his powers—been, in short, everything that he was not—he would have become a very different and superior being; but where meanwhile would have been "Hallowe'en," the "Twa Dogs," "Tam o' Shanter," and the thousand and one songs? Jean was very much pestered by visitors, many of whom called to procure relics of the Poet, till at last she is said good-humouredly to have told one of them that she had nothing to give him unless he took herself. She was certainly the Relic of Burns. She had some offers of marriage of a

* See APPENDIX VIII.

respectable kind, but she steadily refused. She felt herself wedded to the dead, and that her individuality would have been lost had she ceased to be the widow of the great Poet of Scotland.

Burns, by Jean Armour, had five sons and four daughters. Jean, the eldest daughter, was a twin, and she and her brother, Robert, born 3rd September, 1786, died in the course of fourteen months. Twin daughters, born on the 3rd March, 1788, died soon after. Elizabeth Riddell, called after Mrs. Captain Riddell of Glenriddell, was born 25th November, 1792, died at Manchline, 1795, and was buried there, Burns being unable to attend the funeral. Of the Poet's five sons, Francis Wallace, the second son, named in honour of Mrs. Dunlop, was born 18th August, 1789, died 9th July, 1803, aged fourteen. Maxwell, the youngest son, was born on the 26th July, 1796, and died in April, 1799, aged two years and six months. Robert (twin), born 3rd September, 1786, studied three sessions in Edinburgh and Glasgow, obtained a situation in the Stamp Office, London, 1804, got in 1833 a superannuated allowance, came down to Dumfries, saw his mother, whom he had not seen for twenty-six years, and fixed his residence in the Queen of the South for the rest of his life. He remembered his father, who put the "English Poets" into his hand to read, but never mentioned to him his own verses. He was intellectual, a capital mathematician, wrote a song—once a favourite—

"Have ye seen in the calm dewy morning?"

and resembled his father much, alike in his strength and weakness. He lies in the mausoleum. William Nicol Burns was born in Ellisland on the 9th of April, 1791, sailed to India when sixteen as midshipman, became ultimately a colonel; in 1843 retired from the army and came to reside at Cheltenham with his brother, James Glencairn, where he died in 1872, aged eighty-one. James Glencairn was born in Dumfries 12th August, 1794, sought, too, his fortunes in India, became major, and then lieutenant-colonel, returned to Britain and settled along with his brother William in Cheltenham, and died there in 1865, aged seventy-one. Both brothers, too, lie in the mausoleum. They were entertained at the great Burns Festival on the Doon in 1844. Gilbert Burns, Robert's younger brother, went from Mossgiel to the farm of Dinning in Nithsdale; thence to the farm of Morham Muir, near Haddington; thence, becoming factor to Lord Blantyre, he established his residence at Grant's Braes, near Lethington, where he died in 1827, aged sixty-seven. He lies in Bolton Churchyard, East Lothian.

Burns had three sisters, Agnes, Annabella, and Isabella. Agnes married a Mr. Gall, and died in Ireland. Annabella died unmarried at her brother Gilbert's house at Grant's Braes. Isabella married a Mr. John Begg, who became a land steward in Lanarkshire; and after his death she resided first at Ormiston and then at Tranent, till she herself died in 1858, leaving a large family.

We pass now to a chapter or two of criticism.

CHAPTER XIII.

BURNS AS A MAN, LOVER, CONVERSATIONIST, AND RELIGIONIST.

WE cannot close this account—meant, at least, to be a fair and sternly accurate, although meant also to be a favourable, friendly, enthusiastic history of Burns' life—without attempting a summary, however difficult, of his character as a Man. And yet the difficulty is perhaps more apparent than real. Such sharp-pointed sentences as that of Byron about Burns being a compound of "dirt and Deity" do not help us much. Dirt and Deity mixed is a very good general definition of man. Burns, to be sure, had these elements in larger proportions than others, just because he was a larger man—a Big Brother. But if he had more dirt, he had more Deity too. To decide the preponderance of the one over the other is the difficulty of the moral critic, even as to produce a proper subordination of the lower to the higher principles is the greater difficulty of the moral man.

To no one, unless to Shakspeare or Goethe, was Nature kinder than to Robert Burns. True, she found her favourite in an "auld clay biggin'," hearing

> "The restless rattons squeak
> Ayont the riggin' "—

found him a poor man's son, and destined to partake of his father's poverty all his life. This Nature knew; but unmoved by this, she showered on him with prodigal hand her choicest gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh: the gold of genius, the frankincense of a large and loving heart, and the myrrh of keen, acrid, yet aromatic and genial wit. Withal she gave him strong intellect, uncommon and common sense, and a brawny constitution, which seemed built to last a hundred years. But she did not apparently intend him to change his position in life. She

> "Damned his fortune to the groat;"

but in requite,

> "She graced him with a random shot
> O' countra Wit."

What more could Nature have done for him? unless, indeed, the gift of self-control be hers to give, and not rather a habit which the man must acquire for himself. In that he failed, signally, although not perhaps quite so much as many have supposed. Let us remember that if his vices were great, his virtues, too, were great; and that when he died at thirty-seven, there were still vast possibilities before him. He says himself that

> "Aft a ragged cowt 's been known
> To mak a noble aiver."

How many, after sowing their wild oats, become consistent and useful men! He pursued his sowing a little longer than most men of this class certainly; still he died young, and when personal reformation and a long consideration, even, of his wondrous powers might still, had he lived, have been before him. His natural tendencies were good, but distorted by circumstances and position. We by no means intend by this that these were entirely to blame, and not partly himself. But while we condemn Chambers for always pointing to Burns' *Moimême* as the cause of his evils, we own much force in it withal. Circumstances and position are never deserving of blame, any more than they are susceptible of punishment. They are very much what a man makes them to be. Burns might have triumphed over them, and we might by this time of day have been paying him the same pure and unmingled homage we pay to Milton or Wordsworth. But would he, after all, in this case have been quite so dear to us as he is? Would he have been so near to us either? Pour water into a bowl, and it brings a coin previously invisible into sight, and brings it close to our eye too. We see it, and we see it well. And so with the tears of sympathy and sorrow. They interpose a new and softer medium between us and a man. We see him more clearly, and we learn to love him more warmly.

Let us try in a sentence or two to sum up those causes which produced the sad failure of Burns. Poverty from first to last—he never had, for a month together, a hundred pounds he could call his own; hard moiling labour; a bilious constitution; an incipient heart disease stretching like a precipice below his life all his days; the strongest animal organization and passions withal, since Mahomet; imperfect education; society (of necessity) uncongenial and

below him, an irascible temper, a highly nervous temperament, many misfortunes and disappointments, niggardly patronage; "the oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely, the insolence of office, and the spurns which patient merit of the unworthy takes," and which impatient merit gives back with usury; an age when flunkeyism was rampant and independence had not yet left the side of "the violated goddess," who, according to Smollett, "brought forth a Creed too narrow, and a Church too divided and too much secularized; a haughty nobility; a rude though picturesque populace; a middle class virtuous but untrained; a society in many parts of which intemperance and loose morals prevailed to a terrible extent—these were the links, and not all the links either, of the chain which fixed the strong man to the ground or crippled him when he moved above it; these the causes which combined with his own recklessness and want of self-control in rendering him unutterably miserable, hurrying him into folly and sin, and in fine, cutting him prematurely off after a life short in years, long in wretchedness—like a piece of music lengthened out by its dying falls and quavers of anguish. And yet, in spite of all this, it could not be denied that, apart from his unrivalled genius, he was a man of a generous, affectionate, liberal, noble nature—a painstaking ploughman, a diligent farmer, a pattern exciseman, a devoted father, a kind husband, a good neighbour, and in his dealings, as well as in his feelings and opinions, a thoroughly honest man. His cattle on one occasion, we have been told, had found the gate of his neighbour farmer's clover field unbarred, had entered, and committed considerable depredations. Burns did not like to offer, what would certainly have been refused, any recompense for the trespass. Yet his conscience would not be at ease till he threw open one of the fences of his own field, and allowed his neighbour's cattle to take their master's revenge. Of course, there were lower and stormier elements in the man which come out, like characters written in milk, when exposed to fire—the fire of insult, or of softer temptation. But we cannot judge of the whole of any man from transient moods and hurried ebullitions.

Our readers may, perhaps, have seen Sam Bough's engraving of the Bell Rock Lighthouse in a storm. What a fierce, torn, terrible sky! What a strange, dusky, uncertain gloom pervades it! And how the light is so directed and concentrated as to pierce the great darkness, and to rest on the lighthouse and a little bit of the angry sea! With what feelings you contemplate the lonely column standing up in the midst of these frantic waves, which are lashing and dashing, rising, rolling, and uttering, you know though you cannot hear, a thousand furious outcries like those of exasperated and tormented demons. Just one thing is wanting to the grandeur of the scene. You have no fear for the safety of the lighthouse. You feel it can stand a hundred such storms, and that to stand one is to stand for ever. It would be different were there the slightest sensation of doubt, did you see it actually on the first night it had ever encountered such a tempest. Then you might be inclined to pant, to pray, to cheer it on, as if it were a human being. And would you not admire and love it more on account of the dubious struggle? And when you witness a man like Burns assailed by a thousand blasts of passion and appetite, your interest and your regard for him strengthen immensely, and you now see in him an emblem of—

> "Poor Humanity's afflicted Will
> Struggling in vain with ruthless Destiny."

No doubt he fell, but assuredly he struggled not to fall; and ere you condemn and wonder at his weakness, try to estimate the strength of those wild waves and blasts which assailed him; and while you blame him more than them, weep at the thought that between them such a ruin was wrought, and such a glorious wreck remains!

Had he stood, and become a man of marble firmness like his father, what a triumph! And had he attained his father's years he might, for Burns' moral constitution was originally strong and sound. But during his short life he never gained a victory over that more than Protean volatility which characterized him. He was everything by turns, and nothing long. He yielded, as a rule, to every impulse, good or bad, high or low, which assailed him. He was at the mercy of innumerable moods, as diverse from each other as Heaven from Hell. He began life as a Jacobite in politics; he ended it as a Jacobin. He often loved, or seemed to love, several females at the same time; and no sooner had one forsaken him than he had another ready to supply her place. His opinions of men, too, were continually fluctuating. His genius partook of the same uncertainty, and so did his taste and his moral frame. From divinest poetry to sheer doggerel, and worse, how frequently did he descend, and that in the compass of a single page! All this arose partly from his circumstances in life, so unworthy of his genius, partly from his imperfect education, and partly from that seven-times heated fervour, increased by youth, passion, and excess, which burned in his veins. Age, along with a better regulated life, would have abated if not altogether removed this. As it was, the contradictions were never reconciled; the controversies raged even to the hour of death, and despair over the unresolved problem of his history must always mingle with and shade the delight with which we peruse the miracles of his genius. Still he had a noble nature, nobler in its mysterious ruins than others in their cold colossal integrity of moral character, in that faith which, though not altogether "alone," is dead, or in that

perfection of life which might be called divine, were it not that it knows itself, and avows itself, to be perfect, boasts and blabs, and is so unlike the silence with which our God conceals His benevolent operations and character, veils His face, and will, neither to blasphemous calumny nor to flattering advocation, reveal His purpose of Universal Love and His plan of Universal Happiness.

We will not retread the ground on which many critics and biographers have dwelt so long. Burns' errors in the use of stimulants were great, although not exactly habitual. They were intensified by his temperament; they were often forced on him by temptation; they were the habits of his age; they were shared in by some of the greatest of his contemporaries, such as Pitt, Fox, Sheridan, Porson, and at one time of his life, Dr. Johnson; they were common in Scotland among clergymen, even highflyers like Webster; whose example, however, in our more temperate time, cannot mightily seduce, although it may serve as a warning still. Alas! instead of the intemperate habits and customs of our fathers, there have come in even greater uncharitableness, gossip, envy, detraction, mean avarice, hypocrisy, selfishness, cant, and falsehood, than those which Burns lashed with a whip of scorpions. If one devil has (partially) gone out, seven less offensive but even wickeder have entered in, and the last state of society is in some classes worse than the first. We attach no blame to Temperance Societies, which have done immense good; but Burns lived before their day, and has not a word that can reflect on their wise and benevolent supporters. On his other faults delicacy forbids us to dwell more than we have already done. They were peculiarly his weaknesses, but they were not, on the whole, systematic nor seductional, and very seldom were they committed in cold blood. We leave, and we have not sought to disguise them, in trembling hope on the

"Bosom of his Father and his God."

Nay, we cast them on the smokeless altar of the great Christian Sacrifice, as Burns himself devoutly did in many a lucid and penitential hour, in many a sincere and profoundly sorrowful page.

Whom did Burns chiefly love is a more pleasing but still a somewhat puzzling question. We have some doubts if he ever loved one with his whole being. Jean Armour, as we have hinted more than once, he loved sincerely, warmly, at one time passionately; but it was calf love, not the result of profound sympathy, nor of the highest kind of esteem either, although he respected her highly in later days. And so perhaps with Mary Campbell. He loved her with strong, superficial, half-animal passion on earth; he loved her best as "Mary in Heaven!" He could not affect, and had not profound fellow-feeling or kindred tastes with her, nor she with him; and had he married her, says Wilson, he would have broken her heart. His feeling for "Clarinda" we have already characterized rather sternly. His Jean Lorimers *et hoc omne genus* were burnished butterflies, amusing his noontide leisure. Miss Alexander burst on him like a splendid vision, and faded away, although she might perhaps in happier circumstances have fixed him. Maria Riddell he regarded with feelings as changeful and capricious as that lady herself. Charlotte Hamilton comes nearest of all his flames or semi-flames to the ideal of his Other Self. Jessie Lewars was a dream, a dream such as "waves before the half-shut eye" of Death. But, we repeat, he never had his whole nature reflected in a female as in a mirror; and perhaps the thought of this is Utopian—at least in the history of poets it has not been common. If they get even a shred of the Divinity, it is much. Milton got his full wish in the matter, in his second wife, for a year; Shakspeare seemingly not at all. Shelley got his heart's desire in Mary Godwin, and was not satisfied, if it, indeed, be true that the Lady Emilia V——, the heroine of that divinest of rhapsodies, "Epipsychidion," came between them for a season. Godwin obtained the most magnificent woman of her time—physically, mentally, spiritually—in Mary Wollstonecraft, and the Gods took her away soon, because he was not worthy of her, though the express image of his own noble creation in "St. Leon," Marguerite de Damville. In still later times there have been the favourable examples of Wordsworth, Wilson, Southey, Moore, Croly, Browning, Tennyson, Dr. Chalmers; and, on the other side, of Sir Walter Scott, Coleridge, Lord Lytton, Byron, Campbell, Landor, and Dickens. On the whole, we may consider Burns well off, so far as domestic circumstances went, in Jean Armour, a leal-hearted woman, a model mother, and an affectionate and devoted wife.

Much has been said by his biographers about Burns' power over females, which is said to have amounted to sorcery. What was the cause of this? Not beauty, as in the case of Byron; for although Burns was altogether no "vulgar boy," in mere appearance he was little better than a "lout," with the fine eyes and with brawny limbs. It was partly his talk, which he softened and sweetened down to their level. With the accomplished and well-informed, the feeling and poetry of his songs and verses did much; but with them, too, with others, with all, it was greatly the passion that was visibly in him, the excessive power of the love-feeling. Women loved Burns because he loved them; and was, besides, no ordinary swain, but a king of men and a poet of poets. Danaës do not always need a shower of gold to recognize a Jupiter. Byron had something of the same power—less pure, indeed, for he idolized himself even more than he did woman; but perfumed more by sentiment, and pointed

by a coronet. In Shelley and Jean Paul the sentiment predominated, and the love interchanged was Platonic, but the fascination was similar. No doubt there are other considerations. Women like praise as well as appreciate love, and like praise best in its best form—poetry; and this is what the poets alone can worthily give. And this is what Burns, of all poets, was best fitted to give. But his power of giving it lay not in his genius alone, but in his enthusiasm for the woman combined with it. The conditions of success may be named:—1st, he was an extraordinary man; 2nd, he possessed an extraordinary love for the female sex; and 3rd, he was able to render it into matchless song. Had Miss Alexander, the "bonnie Lass of Ballochmyle," received the song in her honour after Burns had become the man of the country, and ere he began to decline, we are almost inclined to believe that the wild dream of his song might have been realized. But probably this is idle speculation.

Burns' conversation was one of the truest, if not the truest, reflection of his powers. John Sterling says, "No man was ever so born a poet but he required to be regenerated into a poetic artist." It is still more certain that no man was ever so born a converser but that he required to be regenerated into a conversational artist. Fluency is a gift; but conversation, in the true sense of that term, is more an acquirement. Johnson was naturally fluent and sonorous enough, but his temperament would often have inclined him to be sullenly silent were it not that he had determined to talk, and, as he said, to "talk his best." Burke, although, as Johnson said of him, "he talked because he had a full mind," yet seems resolutely to have set himself to practise conversation. And Burns, in his early conversations with his father, and brother, and teacher, in his disputes with the Calvinists of the West, and in his Tarbolton Debating Societies, was cultivating with the greatest care that power of conversation by which he was afterwards to astonish Edinburgh. He studied, it is said, even emphasis and modulation of voice. His conversation was not, as many seem to imagine, that of a mere rough, rich mind, crumbling down in unconscious utterance of his unpolished thoughts and untutored feelings. Burns was at once a consummate master of talk, and a man of impetuous impulse and teeming genius. He was not a machine of words, conversing at all times with equal ease. He was often, it is said, for long evenings silent, leaning his brow on his hand, and with his thoughts far, far away, in memory, or remorse, or love, from the societies around him; but at other times, when the social feeling came upon him, or when the fascination of female eyes excited him, or when he felt himself among his rivals in conversational power, or when the sight of some pompous charlatan or haughty lordling aroused his displeasure, he became like a man inspired, and threw out, partly with his eyes and partly with his lips, beautiful, or quaint, or sententious, or wild, or humorous, or pathetic thoughts in a torrent, accompanied by words stronger and often more select than would have occurred to him at his desk or anywhere else, if in a less excited state; pointed by a manly yet artistically-managed elocution, and diversified by anecdotes, compliments, and poetic quotations. It were of no use to deny that there were often oaths, too; but first we cannot say, as Dr. Johnson says of Colley Cibber, that in conversation he had only half original matter to supply, the other half being oaths solely. Oaths, unfortunately, were too common then and long after; for we have heard them in volleys at least twenty years ago from persons seemingly of the first respectability, although now they linger only on the lips of some eccentric individual, who swears still because he has been swearing for sixty or seventy years. Johnson's famous saying about a person on meeting Burke under a shed to shun a shower, and pronouncing him, from his talk, an extraordinary man, would not have applied to Burns, for he under the shed would probably have remained silent, if his chance companion had not been congenial; but no one would have spent a night with him in his happier moods without being astonished at the versatility, the naturalness, and the strength of his genius. Latterly his deepening dissipation and the fierce exasperation of his mind rendered his conversation less uniformly delightful, while probably increasing its power.

Burns was indeed a man of many moods, but his general feeling was that of sombre melancholy—the lightning of his eye flashing above the dark thunder cloud of his face, which in its normal state received from it no illumination, but continued sombre and swarthy, though calm. Thus he looked, we think, generally at the plough, where he did not always walk in glory and in joy—always in glory perhaps, since it was glorious to be a Burns even in silence and in gloom; but seldom in joy, except when he had the sight of a "mousie" running away from his plough, or of a sudden sunbeam of brief, bewitching beauty from the October sky appearing and retiring again, or had some stirring thought of patriotism, or some warm memory of woman; and then he became a poet, inspired beyond the guess of folly, rich beyond the dreams of avarice, happy beyond the bliss of love. Thus men saw him in society, as Wilson describes so beautifully, with his large black eyes subdued into profound and melancholy thoughts. There were even darker moods than these, as when he indited the "Lament," or tossed in his bed in sleepless anguish because of blighted hopes, or follies and sins having "brought forth death," and felt that

> "Deep and shuddering chill
> Which follows fast the deeds of ill."

But how easily and rapidly did he, in general, rebound

into gladness! The sight of a "bosom crony" on the street, the smile of a maiden in the evening from her cottage door, the advent of a new book to the village library, a solitary walk by the river side, an assignation with a beloved female in the glen of green bracken, a starry night, with the "cauld blue north" sending up her streamers, the sound of psalms from a godly household in the gloaming, or the sight of a column of smoke curling from a cottage "lum" in the grey dawn; let him see or hear any of these, and the gloom which had rested on his brow lifted from it like a cloud, and he was glad, and glad profoundly, and glad long. This gladness was of various kinds and degrees, and might be called by various names. Uproarious mirth, deep sober joy, social madness, reinless passion, wild abandonment to the Spirit of the Hour, were all his by turns; but perhaps his most common and characteristic feeling of a lightsome kind was *glee*. The polar opposite of his gloom was gleesomeness, which, in default of a better definition, we may call the Spirit of Song—the spirit in which some men are disposed to sing songs, others to write songs, and others to listen enraptured to songs read or sung. Glee is incompatible usually with excess, though dependent greatly on excitement. Could Burns but have stopped at glee, ere it became extravagance, or got mixed up and poisoned with passion! But, alas! he often could not, and his feelings becoming delirium in the evening, prepared for him a fearful reaction in the morning. But no poet, perhaps no man that ever lived, felt more thoroughly the spirit of glee than "blithe-hearted Burns," as Landor calls him in the lines—

> "Though water is my daily drink,
> Had I met thee, blithe-hearted Burns,
> We should have roared out toasts by turns;"

and he has not only filled, but overcharged his best songs with it, and they shall recreate the feeling in human bosoms for ever more! And the best word for the inspiration which prompted his masterpiece, "Tam o' Shanter," is not, after all, poetic enthusiasm or the glorying of creative power, so much as it is boundless glee. It was this which brought tears to his eyes as he began to recite the part of the marvellous poem in which glee came to its culmination—

> "Now Tam, O Tam, had thae been queans," &c.

As to Burns' religion, he was a Broad Churchman born out of due time. He disliked the severer dogmas of Calvinism; on some of the mysteries of Christianity he was silent, neither accepting nor rejecting them. His hatred of hypocrites and hypocrisy, fanatics and fanaticism, cant and canters, made him often say wild things about religion, if not exactly against it; but he valued it in its ordinances sincerely celebrated, in its professors and preachers when genuine, in its virtues when merciful and unostentatious, in its Founder on the human side of His character. His views on the other fluctuated; but we hope the divinity of Christ latterly commended itself to his view. His first confession, "Christ was from God," seems gradually to have slid into the fuller truth, "He was the Son of God;" and the mildness of the religion of Jesus—its forgiving love and brotherly kindness, its hatred of hypocrisy, oppression, cruelty, cant, and self-righteousness—rendered it very dear to him. He thought, rightly or wrongly, that Christianity did not require a personal Devil, an eternal hell, a bloody vicarious atonement, or perhaps even a scheme of miracles, prophecy, and eschatology, to support its claims or develope its idea; that these rather detracted from its power, which is a power over the heart and the higher principles of humanity. If many said then, and would say now, that this was only to be an almost Christian, Burns would have taken up the title, and bound it as a crown unto him, and said, I would rather be an almost Christian than a Christian bigot or a Pharisee, which were to be in my judgment no Christian at all. I cannot be a Paul; I may be only a doubting Thomas; but Thomas loved before he was able to believe, and after believing he did no more—although his reverence was increased, and he said, "My Lord and my God." His father's creed was very much his son's, only William Burness was able to defend and glorify it by a thoroughly consistent life. A strait creed might have done Burns good, but only as a strait-waistcoat does a maniac—it would have restrained, not changed him; in such an intellect, temperament, and environment as his, such a creed could not, without a miracle, have become incarnate. It would not have made him really better, and we tremble at the thought of the curb of a charger like him breaking, and of his plunging again into the wilderness. It would not, probably, have made him much happier, it might have made him, especially had it improved his morals, less miserable; but he had been at best a caged eagle. Byron thought had he lived *he* might have become a monk; but Burns' strong common sense and hereditary Scottish prejudice would never, we think, have allowed him even to seem to bolt Popish tenets, and he was too religious to need any high-spiced ceremonial and vaulted cathedral for his devotion. Scottish family worship and "the dim religious light" of an auld clay biggin' were enough for him; nay, Nature in a breezy autumn morn, a spring morning, or a stormy winter day, when the blast was bending the trees and raving over the plain, was to him a fitting temple where he could offer up that vague, vast, wordless worship which, perhaps, in a mind like his, soaring ever in its loftier mood toward Immensity and the Supreme God, was the best.

We have often said that Shelley just inverted the

grandest truth in Christianity, and instead of God is Love, said "Love is God." Burns did the same. As love was, in one or other of its forms, the great pervading passion of his life, so it was the secret of his devotion; and his conception of God was that of love universally diffused, and animating more or less all being—the poet himself being only a leaf in that infinite forest in which the Breath of Love was moving continually. And Jesus Christ, as his letters often declare, he considered to be the best and fullest representative and channel on earth of that all-embracing and everlasting Love. This, if by no means the whole of Christianity, was an important part of it, and one which he turned into practice. He loved much; and we have Christ's own authority, that "to him that loveth much, much shall be forgiven." Peace, then, be to us, not him, for "he sleeps well." He was a truant child; but the sleep of the truant child is often deeper and sweeter than that of the diligent scholar. And this deep sweet sleep Burns now enjoys—soothed by the murmur of the Nith, and shadowed by that great blue sky of immensity where he delighted to worship, and where he worships still by silence.

CHAPTER XIV.

BURNS AS A PROSE WRITER AND NATIONAL POET.

WE have, in a chapter further on, characterized Dr. Waddell's "Life of Burns," and spoken highly of many parts of it, and of its pervading spirit. We have hinted, however, that there is a good deal in it from which we differed, and notably from his view of Burns' prose works. He fights hard for his Correspondence, and compares his letters advantageously with those of Cowper, Byron, and others. Here we deem him mistaken. Of his letters we would say—Wonderfully good, considering when, where, and how they were written. But they must not be compared to his poetry, because much of his poetry was written under similar disadvantages to his letters, and is far better. He wrote many of his letters in great haste on deal tables, moist with beer and begrimed with tobacco; on chests of drawers, in the worst inn's worst room, amid bad or boisterous company; sometimes himself half-seas over or more; and so with many of his poems and songs. But as there are men who can leap well when unable to walk or stand, who can sing when they cannot speak, so with Burns. He was, as a rule, better at poetry than prose. His letters are often, indeed generally, loose, careless to a degree, extravagant, forced, their humour riotous without being rich, their eloquence fantastic and flighty, like the boozy boisterous talk of a clever vain man showing off—untrue, as a whole, to his deepest nature, the most untrue discovery he ever made of himself anywhere. Undoubtedly there is much about Burns' Correspondence that is good, nay, much that is transcendent. Besides his letters to Mrs. Dunlop, which Carlyle says are all excellent, there are passages in his letters to Dr. Moore, to Dugald Stewart, to Cunningham, as good as anything he ever wrote. Dr. Robertson said they gave him a higher idea of Burns' power; but what struck him seems to have been their multitude, their variety, and their command over English, which was not the Poet's mother tongue. Had Jenny Lind taken to preaching, and preached some excellent sermons, the first impression would have been that of greater wonder than at her songs. But just as the most untrue outcome of a very true man, Burns, was his Correspondence; so the truest thing from a partially untrue man, Byron, was his. We care less for the mere intellectual power of Byron's letters—which Dr. Waddell rather underrates, forgetting that they contain (see especially his letters from Switzerland) the germs of many of the most striking passages of his finest poems—than we do for the sincerity of their tone. The man is in miserable earnest throughout, and this is their charm. This applies also to a number of Burns' later letters, but not to all. We imagine that many of Burns' and Byron's best letters (in this sense) have never been published, nor ever will. Artistically and morally, Cowper's Letters are better than either, although not so powerful or peculiar. To uplift Burns' letters as a whole to the highest rank, beside Madame de Sevigné's, Gray's, Lamb's, Cowper's, Byron's, or (prospectively) Carlyle's, is, we think, a hopeless task, and augurs rather enthusiasm than critical accuracy.

To pass to his poetry: Burns' powers consisted of great perspicacity; of rude, massive, untaught logic; vivid im-

agination and fancy; a fertile though coarse wit; a humour of the truest vein; lyrical impulse and music; a racy, varied, and powerful diction—all inspirited by a constant play of passionate enthusiasm, and pulsing to the motions of a hot and half-maddened blood. Like most great poets, he combined something of the animal, of the man, and of the woman, with rather much of the first, and with a strong dash of the "Deil" besides. His genius did not lie in him separate from his general idiosyncrasy, like the bag of honey in the bee; it is the result of all his powers and passions, as the sun's crown of rays is the result of all the light and radiance of the orb. And yet his addiction to poetry did not, as some pretend, arise entirely from the warmth of his temperament. He might, indeed, in certain conceivable circumstances, have not been a rhymer; in no conceivable circumstances could he have failed to be a Poet. Had he been a statesman, he would have been a poetical statesman like Burke; or a warrior, have written in fire another Napoleonad; if a divine, he had been a divine like Jeremy Taylor, with something of South superadded; or if he had been a philosopher, he would have wreathed around his speculations richer flowers than even Brown or Wilson has done. But a Poet, *i.e.*, a man of lofty genius, insight, heart, and passion, he of necessity and by nature was.

Burns' place as a Poet has been fixed by the consent of the world. That verdict declares that he is only a little lower in faculty, though greatly inferior in actual development and result, to the very highest poets on earth—the Homers, the Dantes, Shakspeares, and Miltons. Both Burns and Byron possessed, we think, native power to have approached very near those demigods of fame. But many circumstances prevented either of them from reaching an eminence to which they might both have been elevated by their genius.

But Burns was the greatest National Poet that ever lived, if not the only thoroughly National Poet that ever lived. We define a national poet one who reflects most of a nation, who is its broadest and brightest mirror, who reflects in his song both those points in which the nation is generally one with others, and those in which it stands by itself—reflecting the first in virtue of his being a poet, and the second in virtue of being a national poet. And not only must he reflect national character, intellect, and peculiarity in his song, but in himself. He must not be a dead, but a living image of his country. He must not only be a national poet, but himself a microcosm of his nation.

Burns was the National Poet of Scotland. He reflected that country as a whole. He sang its scenery as no one but himself could sing it; if not with the lingering minuteness of detail, or with the large, life-long knowledge of all its features possessed by Sir Walter Scott, yet with a powerful dash, a passionate love, a gusto, an enthusiasm of touch, only competent to his own burning genius. His power in this point, as in many others, lay in abandonment to the impulses that came upon him, and momentary absorption in the objects he was describing: we say momentary, for in this point he differed from Wordsworth, who was immersed in Nature as the river in the ocean, who became, as he so often describes himself, one with it, and continued so—a portion of the tempest, a presence in the calm, a motion among the careering elements. Burns threw himself in the wave, mingled with its headlong transport, shared in its tumultuous joy; but speedily regained the shore, and returned to his manly self again. In such moods—but let him describe them himself—

> "I saw thee seek the sounding shore,
> Delighted with the dashing roar,"
>
> "Or when the deep green-mantled earth
> Warm cherished every floweret's birth,
> And joy and music pouring forth
> In every grove,
> I saw thee eye the general mirth
> With boundless love."

He sang Scotia's manners and customs; and by doing so, preserved some of them in life, saved others from oblivion, and shed a glory and consecration on all—its Kirns, its Hansel Mondays, its Rockings, its Hallowe'ens, its Holy Fairs, its Ordinations, its Family Worship, when

> "The Sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,
> The big ha' Bible, ance his father's pride."

He sang its follies and its sins, its Nanse Tinnoch's hostelries, and its Poosie Nansie's revels, humorous "gangrel" bodies, and "Jolly Beggars"—sang them because, though erroneous, they were human, because there was something good to be extracted even from them, and because they were a portion of Scotland—ay, of moral and religious Scotland—and because he, as Scotland's Poet, must paint its blemishes as well as its beauties. He sang its good things of this life—its "souple scones," its "hamely parritch, chief o' Scotia's food," its "curny ingans mixed wi' spice," its herrings and its haggisses, its "tippenny" and its "usquebae." He sang its grand heroic warfares and grand heroic men in the old War of Independence; and if he did not write any great poems or songs on the noble struggle of the Covenant or Covenanters, when one sneered at it and them, he replied—

> "The Solemn League and Covenant
> Cost Scotland blood, cost Scotland tears,
> But it sealed Freedom's sacred cause;
> If thou 'rt a slave, indulge thy sneers."

And need we say he sang with deep sympathy the ill-

starred Jacobite rebellion; and his "Drummossie Moor" and "Chevalier's Lament" rank among the sweetest of the Jacobite Melodies, and the Jacobite Melodies are among the most beautiful of the songs of Scotland. He sang of the loves and griefs of Scotland's peasantry—their privations and poverty, their misfortunes "great and sma'," their wrongs from cruel factors and haughty landlords, the gashes made by disappointment and death in their hearts; but he sang, also, their love-assignations,

"Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the evening gale."

their courtships, their marriages, their family joys, their "wee things toddlin'" to meet their sires on their return from toil, and all the other blessings which sweeten the bitter draught of being to the poor, and make their cup often mantle with a higher and purer joy than crowns the richest feasts of kaisars and of kings. He sang Scotland's proud, independent spirit—that spirit which has kept her from her earliest days an unconquered and unconquerable land, and which preserves still, amidst all her intimacy of intercourse with England, her integrity of purpose, her patriotic feeling, her strong individuality, her *perfervidum ingenium.* He sang her superstitions—her "ghaists," her "brownies," her "fairies," her "witches," her grisly ideas of Death, and, above all, her "muckle black Deil," in all his guises and under all his names—

"Whatever title suit thee—
Auld Hornie, Satan, Nick, or Clootie."

And he sang his country's religion, not, perhaps, her special dogmatic creed—a yoke our fathers might, but which their sons may not, much longer be able to bear, since in Europe they bear it alone—but her profound belief in God, Truth, Immortality, Christ, and His love. That belief was Burns', and was that of Burns' Bible; and it breathes in this stanza, as well as in the rest of the immortal poem to which it belongs—

"O Thou! who pour'd the patriotic tide
That streamed through Wallace's undaunted heart,
Who dared to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die, the second glorious part
(The *Patriot's God peculiarly Thou art*,
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!),
O never, never Scotia's realm desert,
But still the Patriot and the Patriot Bard
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard."

But Burns was not only in his song, but in himself, a mirror of Scotland. He had most of the merits, and most of the faults, of his countrymen. He had, as we have seen, the perfervid genius so often attributed to the Scotch. Edward Irving, in a letter to Dr. William Anderson of Glasgow, says, "I am accustomed to say that a Scotchman's hand is twice as near his weapon as another man's. They used to say in the middle ages, '*Nemo Scotus sine pipere in naso.*' It is a proverb on the Continent, 'Fiery as a Scotchman;' and the *perfervidum ingenium Scotorum* is well known. My notion is, that in the Commonwealth of Nations the Scotch have been purposed to set forth the indomitableness of man under all outward assaults and oppressions—the adamantine resistance, the asbestos unconsumableness." This belonged, above all Scotchmen of his period, to Burns. But along with this fervour he had a little Scotch pawkiness—inherited probably from his ancestors, who lived not a great distance from Aberdeen—a certain canny common sense, and acted sometimes on his own advice—

"Still keep something to yoursel'
You scarcely tell to ony."

Then he had all the proverbial pride of a Scotchman; and he had a Scotchman's strong intellect. He was no namby-pamby rhymster, no mystical dreamer; but what he calls a "earl stalk" of penetration, sense, and untrained logic runs through all his poems and all his prose works, too, and was, we are told, conspicuous in his conversation. He was a natural sage—if you will, a Socrates of the smithy. Dr. Blair says, as derogation, that Burns' politics always smelt of the smithy; but we have heard long ago conversations at the village smithy where Hugh Blair would have had to play a very secondary part, so full were they of native sagacity and sarcastic wit. It was a smith, by the way, who gave that capital definition of Metaphysics—better than anything in Blair's Lectures—"If ye hear a chield in the pulpit that ye dinna understand, and have a gey rough guess that he disna understand himself, that 's Metapheesicks." Then Burns had all the Scottish humour, and tenderness along with it: humour proved by a hundred pieces of poetry—"The Twa Dogs," &c.—rich, rough, natural, bright, but harmless as sheet lightning; and tenderness, proved, need we say, by those songs in which he has set every mood of the Scottish mind, but especially its grief and its love, to a music sweet as the murmur of the summer brook and the sigh of the breeze through the cones of the ever-green pine of his own mountains. Except in Shakspeare there is no tenderness like that which breathes in the songs of Burns. Then he had a Scotchman's attachment to his country. He was of a pious and worshipping temperament—in one word, he wrote the "Cottar's Saturday Night." We deny not that he had some of his country's faults too—nay, it might be maintained that these faults, while they weakened him as a man, strengthened him as a poet. But we do not and have not palliated them. They do not deserve to be spared, since they spared not him; and many will cry, Curse on the evil influences which laid him low, and at thirty-seven broke one of the hardiest of constitutions

and ruined one of the noblest of intellects. But whatever they were, they were counterbalanced by his truthfulness, his kindliness, his honesty, his sincerity, his enthusiasm, his extraordinary industry as a poet, a ploughman, and a gauger, by the tenacity of his friendship, and the warmth of his love. And if he possessed some of the faults usually ascribed to Scotland, and which, of course, characterized it as a country a hundred years ago far more than now, he wanted others which are sometimes imputed to us—unjustly, at least, to our nation as a whole—hypocrisy, formalism, bigotry, love of money, rooted prejudice, intense clannishness, and an inordinate love of ourselves. Burns had not one iota of these feelings, and could only understand them through the medium of the contempt he felt for them, and which he has recorded in some of his immortal satires—the "Unco Guid," and so on—which reveal in him a power of withering scorn not less remarkable than his melting pathos, simple beauty, and high-toned sublimity.

We know no poet who in nationality can be compared to Burns. Shakspeare was not the poet of England, but of the universe. Moore was too refined, too delicate, too much of a curled darling to be the poet of Ireland; he turned the "wild harp of Erin into a musical snuff-box;" and sturdy Pat likes sterner stuff than Tom Little, with all his wit and all his genius, could supply. Béranger was the poet of Paris, not of France. Goethe was the poet of Germanism, not of Germany; with Germany, the country, he had little sympathy. Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, and Tasso were all Italian poets; none of them was the poet of Italy. Campbell has written beautiful things about Scotland, but his larger poems are on general subjects; and his very best poem and best song—"O'Connor's Child" and the "Exile of Erin"—are on Ireland. Tennyson is the poet of the Court and the cultivated classes in Britain, not of Britain. Sir Walter Scott—never let Scotland forget her obligations to his illustrious shade! perish the thought of sacrificing one great Scottish author at the shrine of another!—was yet not so much identified, either in his works or in his life, in his politics or his position, with Scotland as Burns. And we may even, we have said, go farther, and say that we know no thoroughly national poet but Burns in the world—none answering to the ideal in the past, none in the present; and as national peculiarities are fast fading away, none likely to rise in the future. And might not the Muse who appeared to him in that matchless "Vision" be figured to feel this herself, rising to the conception, as she proceeded to crown him, not the Bard of Coila alone, but the great National Poet of Scotland to all time—

> "And wear thou *this*, she solemn said,
> And bound the holly round my head;
> The polished leaves and berries red
> Did rustling play;
> And, like a passing thought, she fled
> In light away."

CHAPTER XV.

BURNS AS A SONG-WRITER.

IT has been justly said, that in Burns' Epistles and Poems you see more of his general powers of mind—in his Songs more of his passions; that the one class discovers more of his head, and the other more of his heart. This arises partly from the different nature of the compositions, and partly from the different times of his life at which his poems and songs were respectively written. Song-writing does not require nor permit such an exertion of intellect as satire or didactic poetry, or even poetic narrative. Nature, feeling, melody, and above all, thorough sincerity and simplicity, are its chief requisites. Burns' songs, accordingly, are richer in feeling than in thought. They catch and crystallize some one simple emotion — some single swelling in a torn heart, some little incident in personal or domestic life—a feeling that has passed like a breeze over a solitary wanderer at eventide, a mood which has swept over his pillow like a meteor—

> "Some natural sorrow, love, or pain,
> Which has been, and may be again."

Such is the plain but profound material of songs. A song is just an unmeasured sonnet, and aspires to the same simple unity. It is essentially a drop—whether a drop of joy or grief—from a poet's eye, or of blood from his vitals, or of a thunder-shower from the laden sky of his imagination. Such glorious or gloomy drops are Burns' songs: it is a very shower of them he pours forth—some luxurious as lovers' tears; some rich as a patriot's gore; some simple as the dew; and some magnificent as a cloud on which swims the rainbow. But all are true, all clear, and all more or less beautiful.

Strength is not so requisite in songs, though the strong man will be seen in his singing as well as in his more elaborate speech; but he will sing best when ungirt and unbending. And thus, even when his songs passed into the higher form of the ode, as in "Scots wha hae" and "A man 's a man for a' that," always sung Burns, who knew that the true spirit of a song-writer is not effort nor study, but abandonment; and that whenever a strong tide of feeling was flowing beside him, he had only to cast himself fearlessly upon it to reach the shore of success. The swimmer who would ride in triumph on the storm of song must strip him of his intellectual harness, and of the gorgeous robes of his imagination, and wear only a simple garland on his brow; and many who had no such robes to resign, and no such harness to unloose, have yet, by trusting entirely to naked Nature, gained their object. This explains the fact, that while no Scottish poet since Burns has approached him by a thousand degrees in this other department of the art, some, such as Tannahill, Lady Nairn, Robert Gilfillan, and James Ballantine, have uttered melodies not much inferior to his. Burns is, in fact, the greatest of Scotch song-writers, chiefly because he was before the rest in the field, and because his songs are more numerous and more varied. This seems to prove that good song-writing is more an affair of warm heart, considerable ingenuity, and a good ear, than of transcendent genius. Sandy Rogers wrote "Behave yoursel' before folk," and William Miller "Wee Willy Winkie," and neither of these has ever been surpassed by Burns. Song-writing, too, must, more than any other species of poetry, appeal to *universal* feeling; and because thousands who have no liking for strong sense, or pointed wit, or lofty imagination, can relish simple pathos or broad humour, the authors of songs have very wisely accommodated themselves to the popular taste. Wordsworth, in his once famous letter to James Gray about Burns, says that his earlier verses are more valuable than his later, and others have gone the length of asserting that his genius, as well as *morale*, fell wofully off in Dumfries. We think the truth to be this, not that his intellect became weaker, but that his heart became morbidly larger. When he entered the Queen of the South he might have said, "Hail thou Fever that shalt henceforth be my existence! I shall never be calm enough again for such broad, bright pictures, sententious moralizings, and lively narratives, as I produced in earlier days—to short bursts of song or satire, relieving, the one my burning heart, the other my disappointment and chagrin, shall my genius be now and for ever confined." And so, accordingly, it was. His power remained, but his impatience of temperament and his melancholy plight rendered its strong continuous exercise impossible.

Song-writing, latterly Burns' only true solace, has become perhaps his most generally admitted claim to fame. What unquenchable life is possessed by these simple melodies! "Like rivers they are wandering at their own sweet will through many lands, and like winds of balm they are sweetening the very air of the world." Listen to yonder solitary Lowland lass singing in the harvest-field (it is long since Wordsworth heard her Highland compeer, and complained, "Will no one tell me what she sings?"), you can tell what she is singing, it is one of the songs of Burns, perhaps his "Lea-rig." Hear yonder ploughman chanting to himself as he draws his straight clear furrow; the song is Burns' "Caledonia," and as he sings, you see the sentiment in his kindling eye, "Burns was once a ploughman like myself." From the city loomshop, at the hour of dawn, you hear a loud cheerful stave; you hearken, and find it to be "My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here." From the giddy summit of a rising mill-stalk there descends a voice; it is a mason lad singing Burns' "Farewell to St. James' Lodge,"

> "Adieu, a heart-warm, fond adieu,
> Dear brothers of the mystic tie."

Or you, a Scotchman, are pacing in a melancholy vein, thinking perhaps of home, the streets of a southern city on an Autumn eve, when, hark! a strain of dulcet melody from a female voice, mingling with the thrilling notes of a harp or piano; it is an English lady setting "Mary in Heaven" to the exquisite modulations of her Southland tongue. How often under the frowning battlements of Sebastopol did little clubs of brave and true-hearted Scotchmen sing together, and feel the trumpet-like inspiration of—

> "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled;"

words which we heard O'Connell, too, in the very pride of his triumph quote, and by quoting send an electric shock to the hearts of thirty thousand Scotchmen assembled within sight of Burns' monument on the Calton Hill! And what festive meeting of the Scotch, need we say again, met on the beginning of each year—whether in Caledonia herself, or in the backwoods of America, or anywhere else in the wide world—can part without "Auld Lang Syne?" nay, did not the noble Robert Moffat teach the tune of that matchless melody to the Hottentots themselves, and sing it with them for long hours under the soft bright moon of an African night? This is true fame.

Would, we have often breathed the wish, that the Poet could look up from his grave and witness the estimation in which his genius is now held! In this case he would not turn so much to monuments to his memory, or editions of his works, or to the clubs and assemblies meeting on the day of his birth; but the sound of his immortal songs echoing from bank to brae, from town to farm of his beloved land, would be a welcome music in his ear, and he would rejoice to find his purer and better songs circulating most widely, and continuing, as he would say, to "beet the weel-placed lowe o' virtuous love," to stir the blood of manly enthusiasm and enterprise, and to increase that glow of patriotic emotion which can upon occasion teach Britons to front the dangers, make light of the privations, and exhibit a stern and stormy gladness amidst the darkest horrors of war.

Apart from the popularity of his songs, their artistic merit is very great. The best of them are beautiful poems. And even in the worst and feeblest there are rarely wanting little delicate traits and stray images, or touches of tenderness, which redeem the surrounding sterility; and you think of one of those Scotch moors where the desolation is relieved by a single sparkling well, or by a clump of yellow gorse, or by the green margin of a stream finding its stealthy way through the wilderness. In all of them we find the genuine spirit of the Lyric Muse, which is, and ought to be, ever in extremes: its joy, rapture; its grief, despair; its love, agony; its admiration, enthusiasm; its tenderness, passion; its words, oaths; and yet the language used by which is generally as simple as it is strong—"simple as the water, strong as the cataract." Besides the songs to which we alluded to above, there are others by Scott, Hogg, Cunningham, and Campbell, quite equal perhaps to any of Burns'; but taking his songs as a whole, they are the finest extant. The Border Ballads and the early songs of Scotland can alone stand comparison with them. Not the least remarkable of their characteristics is their infinite variety of subject and of mood. The whole heart of Scottish Life is reflected in them, even more than in his Poems, as well as the Poet's own entire history. Scottish love and courtship, domestic felicity and infelicity, jealousies and rivalships, humours, eccentricities, and mishaps, virtues and vices; loyalty to King George and loyalty to Prince Charlie; the scenery of both Highlands and Lowlands; all the seasons of the year and all the divisions of the day; the joys which surround the cradle, the mirth which rings around the marriage, and the grief that weeps by the deathbed and the grave; beauty and deformity; the hopes, disappointments, and despairs of his own bosom—are all included in the Shakspearean songs of Burns, who has discovered the vast width of his sympathies more in these than in any other of his writings.

Not more certainly was Shakspeare the greatest Dramatist, Milton the greatest Epic Writer, and Wordsworth the greatest Reflective Poet, than Burns was the greatest of all Lyrical Bards. In his writings you find every note of the Lyric Muse sounded, every chord of that greater lyre, the human heart, touched with equal mastery, and with a skill in which untaught Nature far

exceeds the efforts of Art. The very essence of love and of chivalry may be found in a hundred of his ditties. Patriotism has inspired his "Scots wha hae," and the spirit of a thousand battles for liberty has breathed through the words, "Let us do or die." Revelry in its wildest, maddest shape, animates his "Jolly Beggars" and "Willie brewed a Peck o' Maut." Manly independence glows in many a noble verse; witness this—

"I hae a penny to spend,
There—thanks to naebody;
I hae naething to lend,
I'll borrow frae naebody."

The love of Nature colours many of his songs besides "Highland Mary," where he shows a passion for her charms only inferior to that for his lost love—

"Ye banks, and braes, and streams around
The Castle of Montgomery,
Green be your woods and fair your flowers,
Your waters never drumlie."

And humanity itself—the love of the whole human race—comes out in the words—

"Its coming yet for a' that."

The proof of the purpose and power of Burns' songs, that they were designed to be the expressions of the universal human heart, is that thay have become so. They are not confined to Scotland or to Britain. They are sung in every land; and are as familiar and enthusiastically welcome among the Rocky Mountains as among the streams and lakes of Coila, among the burning sands of Arabia as among the heather bloom and green bracken of Caledonia, under the Southern Cross of Australia and Queensland as under the morning star rising over Criffel, or the evening sun seen from Ayr setting behind the dark mountains of Arran. There is scarcely another Son of Song in the world of which this can be said.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE INFLUENCE OF BURNS ON SCOTTISH POETRY AND SONG.

WE add a few words on this subject to complete what we have said before. It is exceedingly difficult to settle the exact place of, as well as to compute the varied influences wielded by, a great original genius. Every such mind borrows so much from his age and from the past, as well as communicates so much from his own native stores, that it is difficult to determine whether he be more the creature or the creator of his period. But ere determining the influence exerted by Burns on Scottish song and poetry, it is necessary first to inquire what he owed to his predecessors in the art, as well as to the general Scottish atmosphere of thought, feeling, scenery, and manners.

First of all, Burns felt, in common with his "forbears" in the genealogy of Scottish song, the inspiring influences breathing from our mountain-land, and from the peculiar habits and customs of a "people dwelling alone, and not reckoned among the nations." He was not born in a district peculiarly distinguished for romantic beauty—we mean, in comparison with some other regions of Scotland. The whole course of the Ayr, as Currie remarks, is beautiful; and beautiful exceedingly the Brig of Doon, especially as it now shines through the magic of the Master's poetry. But it yields to many other parts of Scotland, some of which Burns, indeed, afterwards saw, although his matured genius was not much profited by the sight. Ayrshire—even with the peaks of Arran bounding the view seaward—cannot vie with the scenery around Edinburgh; with Stirling—its links and blue mountains; with "Gowrie's Carse, beloved of Ceres, and Clydesdale to Pomona dear;" with Straths Tay and Earn, with their two fine rivers flowing from finer lakes, through corn-fields, woods, and rocks, to melt into each other's arms in music, near the fair city of Perth; with the wilder and stormier courses of the Spey, the Findhorn, and the Dee; with the romantic and song-consecrated precincts of the Border; with the "bonnie hills o' Gallowa'" and Dumfriesshire; or with that transcendent mountain region stretching up along Lochs Linnhe, Etive, and Leven—between the wild, torn ridges of Morven and Appin—uniting Ben Cruachan to Ben Nevis, and including in its sweep the lonely and magnificent Glencoe—a region unparalleled in wide Britain for its quantity and variety of desolate grandeur, where every shape is bold, every shape blasted, but all blasted at such different angles as to produce endless diversity, and yet where the whole seems tortured into a certain terrible harmony; not to speak of the glorious isles

> "Placed far amid the melancholy main"—

Iona, which, being interpreted, means the "Island of the Waves," the rocky cradle of Scotland's Christianity; Staffa, with grass growing above the unspeakable grandeur which lurks in the cathedral-cave below, and cows peacefully feeding over the tumultuous surge which forms the organ of the eternal service; and Skye, with its Loch Coriskin, piercing like a bright arrow the black breast of the shaggy hills of Cuchullin. Burns had around him only the features of ordinary Scottish scenery, but from these he drank in no common draught of inspiration; and how admirably has he reproduced such simple objects as the "burn stealing under the lang yellow broom," and the "milk-white thorn that scents the evening gale," the "burnie wimplin' in its glen," and the

> "Rough bur-thistle spreadin' wide
> Amang the bearded bear."

These objects constituted the poetry of his own fields; they were linked with his own joys, loves, memories, and sorrows, and these he felt impelled to enshrine in song. It may, indeed, be doubted if his cast of mind would have led him to sympathize with bold and savage scenery. In proof of this, we remember that, as formerly mentioned, although he often had seen the gigantic ridges of Arran looming through the purple evening air, or with the "morning spread" upon their summer summits, or with premature snow tinging their autumnal tops, he never once alludes to them, either in his poetry or prose; and that although he spent a part of his youth on the wild smuggling coast of Carrick, he has borrowed little of his imagery from the sea—none, we think, except the two lines in the "Vision"—

> "I saw thee seek the sounding shore,
> Delighted with the dashing roar."

His descriptions are almost all of inland scenery. Yet, that there was a strong sense of the sublime in his mind is manifest from the lines succeeding the above—

> "And when the North his fleecy store
> Drove through the sky,
> I saw grim Nature's visage hoar
> Struck thy young eye."

Perhaps his mind was most alive to the sublimity of *motion*, of agitation, of tumultuous energy, as exhibited in a snow-storm, or in the "torrent rapture" of winds and waters, because they seemed to sympathize with his own tempestuous passions, even as the fierce Zanga, in the "Revenge," during a storm, exclaims—

> "I like this rocking of the battlements.
> Rage on, ye winds; burst clouds, and waters roar!
> You bear a just resemblance of my fortune,
> And suit the gloomy habit of my soul."

Probably Burns felt little admiration of the calm, colossal grandeur of mountain scenery, where there are indeed vestiges of convulsion and agony, but where age has softened the storm into stillness, and where the memory of former strife and upheaving only serves to deepen the feelings of repose—vestiges which, like the wrinkles on the stern brow of the Corsair,

> "Speak of passion, but of passion past."

With these records of bygone "majestic pains," on the other hand, the genius of Milton and Wordsworth seemed made to sympathize; and the former is never greater than standing on Niphates Mount with Satan, or on the "hill of Paradise the highest" with Michael, or upon the "Specular Mount" with the Tempter and the Saviour; and the latter is always most himself beside Skiddaw or Helvellyn. Byron professes vast admiration for Lochnagar and the Alps; but the former is seen through the enchanting medium of distance and childish memory; and among the latter, his rhapsodies on Mont Blanc, and the cold "thrones of eternity" around him, are nothing to his pictures of torrents, cataracts, thunderstorms; in short, of all objects where unrest—the leading feeling in *his* bosom—constitutes the principal element in *their* grandeur. It is curious, by the way, how few good descriptions there exist in poetry of views *from* mountains. Milton has, indeed, some incomparable ones, but all imaginary—such, at least, as no actual mountain on earth can command; but, in other poets, we at this moment remember no good one. They seem always looking up *to*, not down from, mountains. Wordsworth has given us, for example, no description of the view from Skiddaw; and there does not exist, in any Scottish poetical author, a first-rate picture of the view either from Ben Lomond, Schehallion, Ben Cruachan, or Ben Nevis.

After all, Burns was more influenced by some other characteristics of Scotland than he was by its scenery. There was, first, its romantic history. *That* had not then been separated, as it has since been, from the mists of fable, but lay exactly in that twilight point of view best adapted for arousing the imagination. To the eye of Burns, as it looked earnestly back into the past, the history of his country seemed intensely poetical—including the line of early kings who pass over the stage of Bocce' and Buchanan's story as their brethren over the magic glass of Macbeth's witches, equally fantastic and equally false; the dark tragedy of that terrible thane of Glamis and Cawdor; the deeds of Wallace and Bruce—the battle of Flodden; and the sad fate of Queen Mary: and from most of these themes he drew an inspiration which could scarcely have been conceived to reside even in them. On Wallace, Bruce, and Queen Mary, his mind brooded with peculiar intensity—on the two former, because they were patriots; and on the latter, because she was a beautiful and unfortunate woman; and his allusions to them rank with the finest parts in his or any poetry. He seemed especially adapted to be the poet-laureate of Wallace—a modern edition, somewhat improved, of the broad, brawny, ragged bard who actually, it is probable, attended in the train of Scotland's patriot hero, and whose constant occupation it was to change the gold of his achievements into the silver of song. Scottish manners, too, as well as history, exerted a powerful influence on Scotland's peasant-poet. They were then far more peculiar than now, and had only been faintly or partially represented by previous poets. Thus (peculiarities mentioned in Chapter xiv.), the christening of the *wean*, with all its ceremony and all its mirth—Hallowe'en, with its "rude awe and laughter"—the "Rockin'"—the "Brooze"—the Bridal—and a hundred other intensely Scottish and very old customs, were all ripe and ready for the poet, and many of them he has treated, accordingly, with consummate felicity and genius. It seems almost as if the *final cause* of their long-continued existence were connected with the appearance, in due time, of one who was to extract their finest essence, and to embalm them for ever in his own form of ideal representation.

Burns, too, doubtless derived much from previous poets. This is a common case with even the most original. Had not Shakspeare and Milton been "celestial thieves," their writings would have been far less rich and brilliant than they are; although, had they not possessed true originality, they would not have taken their present lofty position in the world of letters. So, to say that Burns was much indebted to his predecessors, and that he often imitated Ramsay and Ferguson, and borrowed liberally from the old ballads, is by no means to derogate from his genius. If he took, he gave with interest. The most common-

place songs, after they had, as he said, "got a brushing" from his hands, assumed a totally different aspect. Each ballad was merely a piece of canvas on which he inscribed his inimitable paintings. Sometimes even by a single word he proclaimed the presence of the master-poet, and by a single stroke exalted a daub into a picture. His imitations of Ramsay and Ferguson far surpass the originals, and remind you of Landseer's dogs, which seem better than the models from which he drew. When a king accepts a fashion from a subject, he glorifies it, and renders it the rage. It was in this royal style that Burns treated the inferior writers who had gone before him; and although he highly admired and warmly praised them, he must have felt a secret sense of his own vast superiority.

We come now shortly to speak of the influence he has exerted on Scottish poetry. This was manifold. In the first place, a number were encouraged by his success to collect and publish their poems, although few of them possessed much merit; and he complained that some were a wretched "spawn" of mediocrity, which the sunshine of his fame had warmed and brought forth prematurely. Lapraik, as we have said, was induced by the praise of Burns to print an edition of his poems, which turned out a total failure. There was only one good piece in it all, and that was pilfered from an old magazine. Secondly, Burns exerted an inspiring influence on some men of real genius, who, we verily believe, would, but for Burns, have never written, or, at least, written so well—such as Alexander Wilson, Tannahill, Macneil, Hogg, and the numerous members of the "Whistle-Binkie" school. In all these writers we trace the influence of the large "lingering star" of the genius of Burns. "Wattie and Meg," by Wilson, when it first appeared anonymously, was attributed to Burns. Tannahill is in much of his poetry an echo of Burns, although in song-writing he is a real original. Macneil was roused by Burns' praises of whisky to give another account in his "Scotland's Scaith; or, the History of Will and Jean." And although the most of Hogg's poetry is entirely original, we find the influence of Burns distinctly marked in some of his songs—such as "When the Kye come Hame."

But there is a wider and more important light in which to regard the influence of our great National Bard. He first fully revealed the interest and the beauty which lie in the simpler forms of Scottish scenery, he darted light upon the peculiarities of Scottish manners, and he opened the warm heart of his native land. Scotland, previous to Burns' poetry, was a spring shut up and a fountain sealed.

> "She lay like some unkenned-of isle
> Ayont New Holland."

The glories of her lakes, her glens, her streams, her mountains, the hardy courage, the burning patriotism, the trusty attachments, the loves, the games, the superstitions, and the devotion of her inhabitants, were all unknown and unsuspected as themes for song till Burns took them up, and less added glory than showed the glory that was in them, and showed also that they opened up a field nearly inexhaustible. Writers of a very high order were thus attracted to Scotland, not merely as their native country, but as a theme for poetry; and, while disdaining to imitate Burns' poetry slavishly, and some of them not writing in verse at all, they found in Scottish subjects ample scope for the exercise of their genius; and in some measure to his influence we may attribute the fictions of Mrs. Hamilton and Miss Ferrier, Scott's poems and novels, Galt's, Lockhart's, Wilson's, Delta's, and Aird's tales and poetry, and much of the poetry of Campbell, who, although he never writes in Scotch, has embalmed, in his "Lochiel's Warning," "Glenara," "Lord Ullin's Daughter," some interesting subjects connected with Scotland, and has in "Gertrude of Wyoming," and in the "Pilgrim of Glencoe," made striking allusions to Scottish scenery. That the progress of civilization, apart from Burns, would have ultimately directed the attention of cultivated men to a country so peculiar and poetical as Scotland cannot be doubted; but the rise of Burns hastened the result, as being itself a main element in propelling civilization and diffusing genuine taste. His dazzling success, too, excited emulation in the breasts of our men of genius, as well as tended to exalt in their eyes a country which had produced such a stalwart and gifted son. We may, indeed, apply to the feeling of pride which animates Scotchmen, and particularly Scotchmen in other lands, at the thought of Burns being their countryman, the famous lines of Dryden—

> "Men met each other with erected look,
> The steps were higher that they took;
> Each to congratulate his friends made haste,
> And long inveterate foes saluted as they pass'd."

The poor man, says Wilson, as he speaks of Burns, always holds up his head and regards you with an elated look. Scotland has become more venerable, more beautiful, more glorious in the eyes of her children, and a fitter theme for poetry, since the feet of Burns rested on her fields, and since his eyes glowed with enthusiasm as he saw her scenery, and as he sung her praise; while to many in foreign parts she is chiefly interesting as being (what a portion of her has long been called) the Land of Burns.

The real successors of Burns, it is thus manifest, were not Tannahill or Macneil, but Sir Walter Scott, Campbell, Aird, Delta, Galt, Allan Cunningham, and Professor Wilson. To all of these Burns, along with Nature, united in teaching the lessons of simplicity, of brawny strength, of clear common sense, and of the propriety of staying at home instead of gadding abroad in search of inspiration. All of these have been, like Burns, more or less intensely Scottish in their subjects and in their spirit.

When we subtract some half-dozen pieces, either coarse in language or equivocal in purpose, the influence of Burns' acknowledged poetry may be considered good. It is doubtful if his "Willie brew'd a peck o' Maut" ever made a drunkard, but it is certain that his "Cottar's Saturday Night" has made many careless earnest, edified the godly, and induced some to erect family altars. It has been worth a thousand homilies. And taking his songs as a whole, they have done much to stir the flames of pure love, of patriotism, of genuine sentiment, and of a taste for the beauties of nature. And it is remarkable that all his followers and imitators have, almost without exception, avoided his faults while emulating his beauties; and there is not a sentence in Scott, or Campbell, or Aird, or Delta, and not many in Wilson or Galt, that can be charged with indelicacy, or even coarseness. So that, on the whole, we may assert that, whatever evil he did by the example of his life, he has done very little—but, on the contrary, much good, both artistically and morally—by the influence of his poetry.

CHAPTER XVII.

HISTORY OF BURNS' FAME.

WE have sometimes thought that even were Burns' poetry to perish, with the exception of the fragments contained in the criticisms which have been written on his genius, these would serve to preserve his memory for ever, and to give an impression of his powers scarcely inferior to that suggested by his whole works; nay, that even were it possible that only the criticisms themselves should survive, they would at once immortalize his name and that of their authors. It is a true sign of wit when it begets wit in others, and that genius must be transcendent which raises gifted men to surpass themselves in its praise, and makes ordinary men for a season seem half inspired. A collection of the eloquent panegyrics which have been passed on the Ploughman Poet in prose and verse by writers of every grade and country—in Scotland, England, Ireland, America, Germany, France, and the British Colonies—would form a monument nearly as large, and far more lasting and brilliant, than any of the mausoleums which have been erected to his memory. Extraordinary, too, has been the unanimity of his critics. While differing widely in their estimates of his character and *morale*, they have, without almost a single exception, expressed a lofty idea of his powers of mind and of the excellence of his poetry. Here, as on the subject of Shakspeare, and on scarcely any other, have Whigs and Tories, Infidels and Christians, bigoted Scotchmen and bigoted sons of John Bull, the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the prosaic and the enthusiastic lovers of poetry, the strait-laced and the morally lax, met and embraced each other. And hence, perhaps, the number and the excellence of the essays which have been written about his genius. Nothing so fatal to criticism as timidity and want of confidence. But all the critics of Burns have felt themselves sustained and cheered on by general sympathy, and by knowing that the opinions they expressed were only the echoes of a universal and warmly-cherished sentiment.

Besides the merit of the poems, several other causes have contributed to this unanimity. In the first place, there had arisen shortly after Burns' death a strong conviction that, with all his errors, he had been, on the whole, a neglected and ill-used man; and sympathy with his unhappy fate led to a generous estimate of his poetry. Ebenezer Elliott says that the public

> "Gave him more than gold,
> They read the brave man's book."

Yes! but they read it with more interest and admiration, because they knew that it was the production of one who had died little better than a pauper in a second-rate Scottish town. Then they remembered his age. And then he had done so little in proportion to his powers. These odes, epistles, stories, and songs—what were they compared to the *man* manifested in them? Nothing, in one sense; in another, they seemed dearer on account of their smallness, and were valued and cherished as you could conceive would be the first fair blossoms of a garden, where spring had never come to summer.

There had, too, been floating through the land an idea of Burns as having in him a general gigantic power, apart altogether from his poetical faculty. Wherever he had gone he had by his eyes, by his manly, fearless manners, by his authoritative but not presumptuous air, by his rich and powerful conversation, as well as by his pregnant silence, exerted on all he met a certain indescribable impression that here was—strangely disguised, indeed, ill-accredited, and partially weakened—one of the kings of men, not the less so that he seemed a king uncrowned and in part degraded. This impression was as universal as it was indescribable. It was felt at the penny wedding, where some rude fellows becoming noisy, the Poet threatened to hang them up in song like *potato bogles*, and they instantly shrunk into silence. It was felt in the mason clubs and the coteries of the kirkyard in the West, as well as by the most select companies in Edinburgh, taking to ladies, as we have seen, the form of fascination. With this commanding and royal nature even his foibles, caprices, and errors seemed somehow to consort. They resembled the errors and foibles of a powerful and popular monarch. There was, besides, a self-assertion about him which added to, instead of detracting from, the effect. He was "great, and knew how great he was." He said that when he died he desired to be buried at full length,

and to have every inch of ground to which he was entitled. He became thus, as well as through that wondrous *readiness* of speech, wit, and verse which he possessed, and which has seldom been combined with such original genius and masculine talent, a *Fourth Estate* within a wide sphere, and suggested the possibility of the very highest achievements. And although his short life prevented the fulfilment of this promise, and although many who knew him might be tempted to cry as they took up his works—Is this *all* Burns has left the world? they would soon add, Yes; but it is the *all* of *Burns*, and must be welcomed with thankfulness and embalmed with joyful tears: "Kings' chaff is better than other people's corn." Previous to his death such a feeling had been floating through the land, and was found strongest in those who knew Burns best. After it, although the mere eleemosynary gifts to him in the shape of subscriptions were but small, the rapid sale and kind reception of Currie's edition of his "Life and Letters" showed how a deep-rooted love to him had been slowly accumulating in the country, and found this opportunity of expressing itself. The history of Burns' fame may be read in the sale of his works; in the many editions of all shapes, and sorts, and sizes which they have passed through—a point in which Burns emulates John Bunyan; and in the number of critiques and biographies of the author which have appeared, vieing in this with Goethe, and surpassing Lord Byron and Sir Walter Scott.

The names of his biographers and critics being Legion, we will only select a few, not merely for individual appraisement, but to show how his fame has grown, at once in its depth and in its width, in the full assurance of its faith, and in the warmth and discrimination of its love. And here, while professing to be free, we disclaim all invidiousness; we shall say exactly what we would have said had we not been ourselves writing a Life of Burns: indeed, a good deal that follows was written long ago. Dr. Currie's Life is for its day, and from a man in Currie's position, admirable. Carlyle hints that he is a little patronizing to Burns, but, as Scott says of Reuben Butler and his occasional pomposity, "the man was mortal and had been a schoolmaster." And so Currie was a popular medical doctor in a large and wealthy town, and he belonged to a literary set who, if De Quincey may be believed, gave themselves *plusquam* provincial airs, and formed a little senate with Roscoe as Cato, and Currie for his Master of the Horse; were disposed to dogmatize on political as well as literary matters; and the leader of whom, Roscoe, a most respectable and eminent man, but no more to Burke than I to Hercules, ventured to challenge *him* on the subject of the French Revolution, and was treated somewhat as W. Crabbe Robinson tells us Cribb, the champion of the ring, treated a young fellow near Cambridge who knew him not, but had a little altercation with him, and offered to spar, when the great boxer laid his hand gently on his shoulder and whispered, "I'm Cribb," and there was no more of it, save gratitude on the part of the youth, who treated Cribb to a jug of ale for not having broken his bones! Currie, if not the most gifted and renowned of the clique, showed himself one of the most sensible of them in his treatment of Burns. He came to Dumfries when the Poet had newly gasped his last, when all sorts of contradictory and exaggerated rumours were floating about his character, and when his MSS., like his character, were one mass of confusion; and out of this twofold chaos the Liverpool doctor formed a Cosmos, treating Burns as a man with a mixture of truth and tenderness which is only beginning to be appreciated, and praising his genius with much eloquence, sincerity, and discrimination—taking the age, and its canons and style of criticism, into account. Then there was his Life by the unfortunate Heron, the Richard Savage of Scotland, without his power, whom Burns seems to have admitted into some of his confidences, and who felt a very natural desire to pull the Scottish Poet down to his own level. An attempt unsuccessful; for although Burns was often foolish and worse, his genius and his pride combined to preserve him from the habitual folly, vice, improvidence, and vanity by which poor Heron's considerable ability and extraordinary industry were neutralized. Of Walker we have spoken repeatedly. He committed two great blunders in the course of his long harmless, useful, and laborious life; he published a bad poem, and he wrote a middling life of a good poet. "The Defence of Order" was mercilessly and somewhat heartlessly mangled by Lord Brougham in the *Edinburgh Review;* and his "Life of Burns," more recently, quivered under the knout of Christopher North. Hogg's Life of our Poet we read recently; it is excessively twaddling, uncritical, full of unvivified gossip, and is, unless from its connection with Motherwell's edition of the Poems, nearly forgotten. Lockhart's "Life of Burns" came out in *Constable's Miscellany*, and excited great expectation. He was limited, however, in space, and perhaps in time. It is too short, and resembles rather a thickly and strongly chiselled inscription to his memory on his tombstone, than a careful and complete account of his life or estimate of his character; or it may be called a *bust* of Burns, and, like all busts, while showing the intellect, it omits the heart. It does not seem the result of much personal investigation. It contains, however, many admirable passages, and its writing, as always with Lockhart, is sharp clear, masculine, and decisive. It was with Burns the Man, strong, sarcastic, proud, and fearless, with his appetites and passions as well as with his powers, that Lockhart sympathized: he cared not so much for Burns the Poet, and still less for Burns the Lyrist. He had been

himself an exquisite lyrist in his youth, as his Spanish Ballads prove; but that power had died out of him long before he lifted the iron pen of his middle life to write his Burns, Scott, and Napoleon. Lockhart's text was eclipsed by the rich marginal comment of Carlyle's paper on it in the *Edinburgh Review*. Hamilton Paul's Life hardly deserves notice. Its one good point is its zeal for Burns—a zeal seldom according to knowledge. He defends Burns' most exceptionable words, deeds, and writings, instead of first recording them, admitting their evil, and then contending that there was nevertheless a balance of good on the Poet's side which justified his claims to be counted a worthy man in the main, as well as a most admirable writer. Gibbon says, "The wretched Travis still writhes under the lash of the merciless Porson; and it might have been expected that the same could be told of poor Paul under the scourge of knotted scorpions wielded by the late Dr. Andrew Thomson of St. George's, Edinburgh, in his *Christian Instructor;* but we believe he felt it very lightly, and lived and died in the hospitable manse of Broughton a happier man than his over-tasked, over-excited, one-sided, prematurely removed, though honest, fearless, and formidable assailant.

Allan Cunningham's "Life of Burns" is a very characteristic and ably written production, full of new facts in the poet's history, conceived in a spirit of thoroughly brotherly appreciation; worthy of a master mason, a self-taught bard, and a double-dyed Scotchman; an interesting, rambling, genial book, perhaps written in too gay and easy a style, as if the author were recounting the incidents of a comedy, and not a deep and painful tragedy; and you cannot apply to Cunningham's "Life of Burns" (nor yet to Chambers'), the lines of Wordsworth on a picture of a Shipwreck by Sir George Beaumont—

> "Oh! 'tis a passionate work, but wise and well,
> Well chosen is the spirit that is here,
> The hulk that labours in that deadly swell,
> That sky in anger, and that rueful shore!"

Yet Robert Chambers' Life, though its tone of criticism be not very lofty, nor its taste always the best, is a very praiseworthy production. If not *the* Life of Burns, it contains a most valuable mass of materials for it. It collects in four volumes, as in four baskets, almost all that can be gathered of the poetry, prose, correspondence, and the incidents of his story. His mode of estimating Burns was generally sound and judicious. We have been compelled in our own effort often to differ from him, but cheerfully admit the general spirit of impartiality, fairness, and kindliness, which distinguish the Memoir. Robert Chambers, whatever might be his deficiencies, was a sincere lover of truth, an eminently candid and conscientious man. But apart from the want of much enthusiasm and of fine instinct, his temperament was entirely opposed to that of Burns. No one can doubt this who has ever seen him—the genuine, "auld-farrand, canny" Scotchman; the half of a Sir Walter Scott, with Scott's research, common sense, Scottish sympathies, his kindliness, and his calm, but without his rapt Minstrel feeling, his commanding and creative genius. The only time we ever met Chambers, he spoke to us warmly of Scott; and alluding to something we had said in a lecture on him, told us that he, too, read all the Waverley Novels through every year, or nearly so; and while he was talking thus, we were all the while struck with his extraordinary resemblance in person and manners to our conception of Sir Walter. But, at the same time, we felt assured that he was never fitted to be the biographer—*i.e.*, the final or thorough-going biographer—of Burns: Burns, who could and did commit more follies in a week than Chambers in a long life-time, and would and did condense more wit and curdle more genius into a single night than Chambers into a decade. This vital divergency between the two men will for ever prevent Chambers' Life taking up the lofty and lonely place to which its elaborate painstaking, its general fairness, and its good, manly composition would have entitled it. The Rev. Dr. Hately Waddell has gone rather too far on the other extreme. His work is a long and powerful prize poem, written with immense fellow-feeling, energy, and eloquence. It has been preceded by very diligent and extensive inquiry; and although you sometimes think of the philosopher who, when the facts were against his theory, said, "So much the worse for the facts," Dr. Waddell always means to tell the truth. But the whole (he will permit us to say, both out of respect to him and from a wish to imitate his love of truth-telling) is pervaded by a spirit of enormous exaggeration. His imagination creates stilts, on which he mounts Burns a hundred miles higher than his level; his conception of him is epic, not historical or biographical; his language in panegyric would need some modifications were it applied to an angel; and although some passages in the book are among the most powerful and eloquent of the present day, we cannot compliment Dr. Waddell either on the judgment which overruled the composition of the whole or arranged the order of the parts. A more complex and confused book does not exist in our literature, nor a more earnest and animated one; and as a piece of Hero Worship, it must hold its place as unique and eclipsing all others, so that, even when compared with Wilson's *Eloge*, it seems another

> "Morn risen in mid-noon."

Besides biographers, all or most of them possessing much merit, there have been many criticisms, surpassing the Lives alike in excellence and in popularity. The first of

these of much mark was Lord Jeffrey's, which owed both its power and its weakness to the intense dissimilarity between the critic and the poet. Jeffrey's fine critical instinct could not despise the manly and natural poetry of Burns; but his fastidiousness, as also in the case of Wordsworth, rendered him too sensitive to its rude environment; he liked the honey, but saw little beauty or order in the rough honeycomb. Although a kindly and genial, he was an artificial man—the pet of the very drawing-rooms which Burns some twenty years before had made to tremble at his stalwart stride, leaving, as Cunningham has it, the red earth of the plough on their carpets; and he could not endure either the unkempt manhood of the Peasant or the rustic coarseness of the Poet. He even tried to trip up Burns' heels, forgetting that, falling at the plough, where could he fall but on the fresh, soft, strong earth; and how could he rise but in the attitude of an Antæus? The one great point he made against Burns was when he accused him of sometimes affecting the oddities and copying the vices of the wits of the previous age. But the attack was altogether petty, and unworthy of the better nature and nobler qualities of Jeffrey. We must say, too, that Jeffrey seldom did justice to the genius of Scotland. He was niggardly in his editorial praise of Professor Wilson, of Lockhart, of James Hogg, of Chalmers, of Scott as a poet. To Campbell alone, among Scotchmen, and to Alison has he done justice—heaped up, pressed down, and shaken together; and he reserved even richer encomiums for Dickens and Crabbe and Macaulay. Edward Irving he never mentions at all, nor, among English writers, Hall or Foster. When Carlyle's review of Lockhart's "Life of Burns" appeared in the *Edinburgh* it was attributed by some to Jeffrey, although internal evidence was against this, both in its style and its sentiment. The style was High German (considerably clipped, we know now, by Jeffrey's nimble scissors), and the sentiment singularly generous and noble. There were four conceivable ways of treating Burns—Impeachment, Monody, Calm but Loving Criticism, and Glorification. Jeffrey had followed the first course; the time for the third was not yet come; Dr. Waddell was alone fully competent for the fourth; Carlyle became the organ of the second, and his is surely one of the finest prose monodies in the world! It sounds like a coronach among the mountains—how full of love and sorrow, of blame and pity; blame so severe and measured, pity unlimited and "yearning, like a God in pain;" and its exaggeration of the powers and virtues of the man is forgiven in your feeling of the unutterable charity shown for his faults and sympathy with his fate. It is the most eloquent and human thing Carlyle ever wrote, unless it be his paper on the death of Edward Irving, which belonged also to the early part of his literary history, when his genius was as yet unperverted by prejudice, when his disappointment at humanity had not soured into misanthropy, and his young enthusiasm for this "Divine Temple of Heaven and Earth" had not sunk into that disgust at the "dog-hole" and beggarly world which he now habitually calls it. Yet in Carlyle's pleading, powerful though it be, he seems sometimes to have another Burns in his eye—a Demon of the Brocken mist magnified. What he says about Burns' actualities is better than what he says of his possibilities. If Burns did all Carlyle says, there was little need of more. What were twenty epics like, say Southey's, compared to a few such tales as "Tam o' Shanter," and songs like "Scots wha hae?" Goethe's power is widespread over twenty or thirty volumes, but the real gist of his matter lies in much less compass—in some pages of "Werter," some chapters of "Wilhelm Meister," "Faust," a few ballads, odes, and many fragments of conversation And so with most writers, you must subtract a vast quantity of rubbish. Shakspeare and Scott least require this; and with Burns, if he has done comparatively little, a large proportion of it is good. By that little, too, Burns made himself the God of a Nation; a small, but distinct, intelligent, clannish, and growing people, each one member of which can carry all its Poet's songs and verses in his pocket, yea, in his memory. This apart from the power and charm Burns has exerted on other nations, which is very great. Then Burns is the Poet of Love, and as long as that strange, delightful, but delusive passion exists, so long will he reign. Here again is an enviable power, which a hundred Iliads could not have given him. Perhaps we mourn too much over his early fate, as well as his slight achievements. To himself the loss was no greater than to other men; to us, since he has done so much and taught us so much both by life and death, it was not so great as is supposed. He had done his work. Morally, he has become our "frightful example" for ever, and perhaps done more good in this way than evil was done by his errors. His virtues, too, were clearly if not completely shown ere his death.

There is great talk in Carlyle and others about Burns' intellect. But we doubt if it, although very strong, was at all equal to his passion and poetical temperament, and their excessive strength weakened it in some degree. After all we hear of Robert Burns' logic, it was Gilbert, his brother, who always took the lead in discussion, and was thought superior to him. Passion, soured by poverty, roused to fury by imagination and social indulgence, and only partially fed by intellect and restrained by common sense, was the staple of Burns' character, the master current of his being, the source at once of his rise, his ruin, his songs and poetry, his moral suicide, his perpetual power while living, his everlasting fame after death. He

was, though not a Seraph, a Burning One, the flame neither celestial nor terrestrial, but human, the red radiance of the Earth, like that of newly made Man when he rose from the ground out of which he had been taken.

Hazlitt, in his "Lectures on English Poetry," has some beautiful remarks on Burns' genius and character, giving, as is usual with him, the essence of volumes in a few sentences:—"Shakspeare says of a man that he seemed made after supper, and of a cheese-paring. Burns, the poet, was not such a man. He had a strong mind and a strong body, the fellow of it. He had a real heart of flesh and blood beating in him. You can almost hear it throb. He was as much of a man, not the twentieth part so much of a poet, as Shakspeare. He had an eye to see, a heart to feel—no more. His pictures of good-fellowship, of social glee, of quaint humour, are equal to anything—they are up to Nature; they cannot go beyond. The sly jest collected in his laughing eye at the sight of the grotesque and ludicrous in manners, the large tear rolled down his manly cheek at the sight of another's distress. His virtues belonged to his genius, his vices to his situation, which did not correspond to his genius." Wordsworth has written a long, ingenious, but wire-spun and coxcombical letter in defence of Burns to James Gray of the High School. Professor Wilson's Essay, prefixed to the "Land of Burns," hovering between a life, a criticism, and an apology, is one of the most magnificent panegyrics extant. It gushes on like a great river, now gliding at its own sweet will, now sporting in shallows, and now rushing red with poetic fury, till—down leaping from its crag, like a "god to suicide," deafened as well as drowned—Foyers cries for quarter in the fell uproar! It is by no means, however, a fair or impartial character of the man, and reveals Wilson rather than Burns. Delta in one of his best poems magnified Burns' genius and defended his memory. Thomas Aird has often, in his "Old Bachelor" and elsewhere, touched in the most genial spirit on points in Burns' history and poems; and his defence of the Burns' Festival in 1844, transferred from his paper, the *Dumfries Herald*, to *Blackwood's Magazine*, was worth all the speeches at that entertainment put together. Thomas Campbell has some exquisite sentences of criticism on Burns in his "Specimens of English Poetry." Alexander Smith's Life is sketchy and hurriedly written, as well as short; but has some of its author's felicitous strokes and beautiful figures, and the figures of the poet of the "Life Drama" have seldom been surpassed. Having himself risen from the ranks, he is the better able to sympathize with Burns' position; and his own fine sensuousness of spirit and language leads him to appreciate more warmly in Burns' songs—

"The bloom of young desire, and purple light of love."

We need not quote Byron's one affecting and eulogistic line on Burns in his "English Bards." Charles Lamb and Coleridge have charming allusions to the great ploughman, and could in different styles have produced unequalled criticisms on his writings and life. We notice only two more on the subject—a very sensible estimate of Burns by the Rev. James White; and a kind of drama, or rather succession of dramatic scenes, by our friend Dr. Hutcheson Stirling—"Burns in Drama"—an exceedingly clever and characteristic *brochure*, some of the scenes in which, such as the Tailor in the Auld Clay Biggin, Jean and Burns Courting at the Bleaching Green, and Ainslie, Burns, and Jean at Ellisland, are rendered with the hand of a master, and must be read and enjoyed by hundreds to whom the "Secret of Hegel," and "Regarding Protoplasm," are a spring shut up and a fountain sealed.

Apart from literary recognitions, no sooner was Burns dead than there arose, we have seen, a stir of sympathy, subscription, and stone-cutting throughout the land. Then followed great gatherings in his honour—one of the most notable of which was the Festival on the banks of the Doon in 1844; and without inquiring too minutely into the history of that demonstration, or speaking of certain circumstances which somewhat marred its harmony, we may say that it developed a great deal of genuine feeling for Burns, which Professor Wilson caught up, and with his large and generous hand flung abroad (in *Blackwood*, where his speech appeared) over all the country. More thoroughly spontaneous was the Centenary celebrations of 1859, where all ranks, high and low, all creeds and denominations, all varieties of opinion and of caste—nobles, cotters, cotton lords, artizans, churchmen, dissenters, tectotallers, men of mason lodges, and many Englishmen, Irishmen, and foreigners—commemorated the birth of Burns, not in riot and revelry, but in calm, sober, though merry and multitudinous assemblages. Then it was publicly said, and the saying was enthusiastically responded to, Scotland has this day proclaimed an act of oblivion to her Poet's errors. She may remember them, ought to remember them to-morrow, and be instructed and warned by them; but to-day she cries out in the language of the Poet, a little altered—

"Seek not, at least not now,
To draw his frailties from their dread abode."

To-day let there be solemn silence in reference to all that was unworthy in his life, and loud, reverberated, and enthusiastic applause as to what was noble in his character and immortal in his song. We can only allude to the statues in Glasgow, New York, Kilmarnock, Dumfries, and Dundee—some of them, like Sir J. Steel's already spoken of, entirely worthy of poet and sculptor—which are seeking to stereotype in everlasting bronze the feeling

with which Scotland, Britain, and the world regard his memory.

CONCLUSION.

THUS we close our Life and Criticism of Burns. If we have not succeeded in digging out a great many new facts or documents, we have found some of both; we have, we venture to hope, maintained a freshness of treatment throughout, and have followed slavishly no model. We have tried, whether successfully or not it is for the public to decide, to steer a medium between a partial apology and a ruthless and unsparing dissection. We have sought to blend pity and blame, admiration and love—the latter preponderating—as the true libation over his dust. We are, at least, certain of this, we have fulfilled the intention which we expressed in our first page—we have written it with the heart; and with the heart, too, we close by dedicating this biography to the memory of our late dear and devoted friend, Thomas Aird, who long lived in Dumfries, possessed a lofty genius, which he, next to its consecration to God, laid on the same altar with Scotland's supreme poet—that of the land they both loved so dearly; and who now slumbers not far from the fiery dust of Robert Burns.

GEORGE GILFILLAN.

APPENDIX.

No. I.—Burns' Cottage.

We publish a letter we received from a gentleman in Stirling of respectability and enthusiasm on the subject of Burns :—

"Dear Sir,—Will you permit me, as a stranger to you personally, to say that it is with infinite satisfaction I observe you are about to publish a Life of Burns. From your pen I know what it will be, and I shall eagerly look for it. But there is one point which I venture to urge upon you—viz., to advocate the purchase of Burns' Cottage, with a view to its being made public property, as in the case of Shakspeare's house. As all the thinking world knows with pain, the cottage is at present a second-rate dram shop, which should be allowed to remain so no longer. I am sure you will be ready with your pen and influence to urge the purchase of the cottage at once. Knowing, as I do, the grand-daughter (Mrs. Gresitt) and the nieces of Burns intimately (the Beggs), I am in a position to say that they feel deeply the position in which the cottage stands. I send you herewith copy of a letter which I wrote in the *Daily Mail* of 14th February last, which favour me by perusing. You will gather from it what I, in common with all admirers of Burns, so much desire."

We only add that we cordially approve of Mr Dick's proposal, and trust that it will be energetically and generally taken up by the public. Not from a Good Templar or Temperance point of view at all, but on general grounds, it is a pity that the birth-cottage of our great Scottish Poet should be a public house, as if for the purpose of forcing on the memory of men facts in his history which we say not can or should be forgotten, but which it is not pleasant to have *thus* recalled, especially in reference to a cottage where his first innocent days were spent, and which was not a public house from the beginning. We trust that, in pursuance of these hints, the cottage will soon cease to be a public house and become the Public's House.

No. II.—The Monument to Burns' Parents.

In the text, here and afterwards, we describe our emotions at beholding the stone erected by Burns to his parents. We were not aware then, nor till lately, that the original stone has long been destroyed and carried away piecemeal, and another substituted of somewhat finer proportions by David Auld of Dunbrae. Still, the association remains. Chambers thus writes about Alloway Kirk :—"The church has long been roofless, but the walls are pretty well preserved, and it still retains its bell at the east end. The inner area is now divided by a partition wall, and one part forms the family burying-place of Mr Cathcart of Blairston. The 'winnock bunker in the east' is a conspicuous feature, being a small window divided by a thick mullion. The old oaken rafters of the kirk have mostly been taken away. The old road by which Burns supposed his hero to approach Alloway Kirk lay considerably west of the present. The ford and the well are still, we believe, pointed out; but the cairn and the thorn have vanished. The area of the churchyard is now crowded with tombs and monuments—many belonging to fashionable people who have determined to make that classic spot their 'God's Acre.'"

No. III.

We here print for the first time a document drawn up by Burns in reference to his natural daughter, Elizabeth Burns, daughter of Elizabeth Paton. It was drawn up at the time he was talking of going to the West Indies. It was kindly communicated to us by Dr. Grierson, of Thornhill. Elizabeth Burns was born in 1784. She received her portion of £400 with another natural daughter of the Poet, which was subscribed after the death of Burns. Elizabeth Burns became the wife of John Bishop, overseer at Polkemmet, and died in December, 1816.

"Know all men by these Presents that I Robert Burns in Mossgiel: Whereas I intend to leave Scotland and go abroad, and having acknowledged myself the father of a child named Elizabeth, begot upon Elizabeth Paton in Largieside: And whereas Gilbert Burns in Mossgiel, my brother, has become bound, and hereby binds and oblidges himself to aliment, clothe,

and educate my said natural child in a suitable manner as if she was his own, in case her Mother chuse to part with her, and that until she arrive at the age of fifteen years. Therefore, and to enable the said Gilbert Burns to make good his said engagement, Wit ye me to have assigned, disponed, conveyed and made over to, and in favors of, the said Gilbert Burns his Heirs, Executors and Assignees, who are always to be bound in like manner with himself, all and Sundry Goods, Gear, Corns, Cattle, Horses, Nott, Sheep, Household furniture, and all other moveable effects of whatever kind that I shall leave behind me on my departure from the kingdom, after allowing for my part of the conjunct debts due by the said Gilbert Burns and me as joint Tacksmen of the farm of Mossgiel, and particularly, without prejudice of the foresaid generality, the profits that may arise from the publication of my Poems presently in the press—And also, I hereby dispone and convey to him trust foor behoof of my said natural daughter, the Copyright of said Poems in so far as I can dispose of the same by law, after she arrives at the above age of fifteen years complete—Surrogating and substituting the said Gilbert Burns my brother and his foresaids in my full right, title, room and place of the whole Premises, with power to him to intromit with, and dispose upon the same at pleasure, and in general to do every other thing in the Premises that I could have done myself before granting hereof, but always with and under the conditions before expressed—And I oblige myself to warrand this disposition and assignation from my own proper fact and deed allenarly—Consenting to the Registration hereof in the Books of Council and Session, or any other Judges' Books competent, therein to remain for preservation and Constitute . . . . . whereof, I have w . . . . . Procutars &c.—In witness whereof I have wrote and signed these Presents, consisting of this and the preceding page, on stamped paper, with my own hand, at Mossgiel the twenty second day of July, One thousand seven hundred and eighty six years.

ROBERT BURNS."

No. IV.—WILLIAM BURNESS' MANUAL OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF.

THROUGH the kindness of our clever friend and fellow-townsman, Charles Maxwell, Esq. (one of the most enthusiastic and well-informed *Burnsians* in Great Britain), we are favoured with the sight of a copy of this document. It was first mentioned by Dr. Currie in his Life of the Poet in the following terms:—"There is in Gilbert's hands a little Manual of religious belief, in the form of a Dialogue between a Father and a Son, composed by him for the use of his children, in which the benevolence of his heart seems to have led him to soften the rigid Calvinism of the Scottish Church into something approaching to Arminianism." This MS., which was in the handwriting of John Murdoch, Burns' early teacher, was, and remained in, the possession of Gilbert Burns, the Poet's brother, and it now belongs to his youngest son, Gilbert Burns, resident at Knockmaroon Lodge, Chapel-Izod, County Dublin; and with his permission a limited edition of 600 copies was printed in Kilmarnock, 1875, one of which now lies before us.

This Manual can by no means be ranked very high as a theological treatise. It contains, however, the bones of a very fair *Moderate* sermon of the period, and is written in a clear, correct, and unimpassioned style. The author proves that there is a God by the common argument that nothing can make itself, and (writing before Hume's Essays) that Nature demonstrates its Creator to be possessed of all possible perfections; and that we ought to serve Him out of love. He accounts for the fact that all men do not serve or love God from the Fall and the power of the Devil, brings in the promise of the Woman's Seed as counteracting that power, and lays great stress on men aiming at salvation through the exercise of their own faculties, along with the seeking of grace. Proceeds to prove the Christian Revelation true by four marks—1st, It must be worthy of God; 2nd, Answer all the necessities of human nature; 3rd, Must be sufficiently attested by miracles, and known by prophecies and their fulfilment. He then distinguishes very acutely and clearly between the three Jewish laws, the Ceremonial, the Judicial, and the Moral. He then, and here his Arminianism peeps out, maintains, that if we be but upright in our endeavours to obey the Moral Law, and sincere in our repentance upon our failing or shortcoming, we shall be accepted according to what we have. He then ably defines faith, impresses the necessity of repentance, describes almost graphically the intestine conflict between the animal and the spiritual natures in man, and closes by a very ingenious attempt to reconcile the injunction of Christ to His disciple to take up His Cross, and His promise that godliness has the promise of this life and all its innocent enjoyments, as well as that to come.

Such is the sum and substance of this brief Manual. Nothing is said in it of the Trinity, of (properly speaking) the Atonement, of the Divinity of Christ, or of Eternal Punishment. Alike in what it has and what it wants, it is very much the Creed of the Poet, and in this age, while many will hold it to be bare as a birch tree in December, others will think it is covered over with very dubious propositions, as with the rich but loose and faded foliage of Autumn. As this is not a controversial work, we simply leave this outline of it with our readers. It was then, and would be thought still, a remarkable production from the pen of an uneducated man.

No. V.—THE GLENRIDDELL MS.

To Mr. Maxwell's kindness we are also indebted for a sight of a little book published in Liverpool in 1874, entitled, "Some Account of the Glenriddell MS. of Burns' Poems, with several Poems never before Published; Edited

by Henry Bright; Published for Private Circulation." In the preface to this *brochure* the editor mentions that the widow of Mr. Wallace Currie (son of Dr. Currie) presented to the Athenæum Library, Liverpool, two volumes, one of "Poems written by Burns, and selected by him from the imprinted collection for Robert Riddell of Glenriddell, Esq."—a quarto volume of 162 pages, exclusive of portrait, title, and an introductory letter; the letter and seventy-eight pages of the poems being entirely in the Poet's handwriting, the rest of the MS. being in the handwriting of amanuenses, with occasional corrections and remarks by Burns himself. The second is a volume of "Letters by Burns, selected for R. Riddell, Esq."—a quarto volume containing 103 pages, exclusive of title and portrait; the first six pages blank, the rest of the volume in Burns' autograph. These are now placed in a glass case in the library, and may be readily inspected. The unpublished matter of the Letters has appeared in the *Athenæum*, August 1, 1874. On the fly-leaf of the volume of poems are the arms of Mr. Riddell and a portrait of Burns; on the title-page is the inscription, "Poems written by Mr. Robert Burns," &c., and ten lines of verse about Burns, very poor, by some unknown hand. Then comes Burns' Preface, which we may transcribe, as it is characteristic:—

"As this Collection almost wholly consists of pieces local or unfinished, fragments the effusion of a poetical moment, and bagatelles strung in rhyme simply *pour passer le temps* —the Author trusts that nobody into whose hands it may come will, without his permission, give, or allow to be taken, copies of anything here contained, much less to give to the world at large what he never meant to see the light. At the gentleman's request, whose from this time it shall be, the Collection was made; and to him, and, I will add, to his amiable lady, it is presented, as a sincere though small tribute of gratidude for the many, many happy hours the Author has spent under their roof. *There*—what Poverty, even though accompanied with Genius, must seldom expect to meet with at the tables and in the circles of fashionable life—his welcome has ever been the cordiality of Kindness and the warmth of Friendship. As, from the situation in which it is now placed, this MS. may be preserved and this preface read when the hand that now writes and the heart that now dictates it may be mouldering in the dust, let these be regarded as the genuine sentiments of a man who seldom flattered any, and never those he loved.

"27*th April*, 1791." ROBERT BURNS."

Mr. H. Bright proceeds to give a complete catalogue of the poems thus preserved, and full transcriptions of those not previously published, along with notes added to them in Burns' own hand, or others; and a number of alterations and various readings, few of much importance. They are altogether fifty-seven in number. Some of Burns' notes are curious. Thus to

"In Mauchline there dwells six proper young belles,"

he adds, "Miss Armour is now known under the designation of Mrs. Burns." To the song, "I murder hate by flood or field," he adds an additional stanza—

"I would not die liko Socrates
For all tho fuss of Plato;
Nor would I with Leonidas,
Nor yet would I with Cato."

To "Holy Willie's Prayer" he annexes a rather long and not very refined note, in which he speaks of his possessing that polemical chattering which ends in tippling orthodoxy, and that spiritualized bawdry which refines to liquorish devotion. In the copy of his letter to Dr. Moore Burns appends some queer and characteristic remarks on the work of the amanuensis who transcribed it. He says he is not answerable for the bad spelling and punctuation—"I have something generous in my temper that cannot bear to see or hear the absent wronged, and I am very much hurt to observe that in several instances the transcriber has injured and mangled the proper name and principal title of a Personage of the very first distinction in all that is valuable among men—antiquity, abilities, and power (virtue everybody knows is an obsolete business); I mean the Devil. Considering that the transcriber was one of the clergy, an order that owe the very bread they eat to the said Personage's exertions, the affair was absolutely unpardonable." Under the heading of the poem on the death of Sir James Hunter Blair he says, "He once pressed my hand and asked me, with the most friendly warmth, if it was in his power to serve me. I had nothing to ask him; but if ever a child of his should be so unfortunate as to be under the necessity of asking anything of so poor a man as I am, it may not be in my power to grant it, but, by ——, I shall try!"

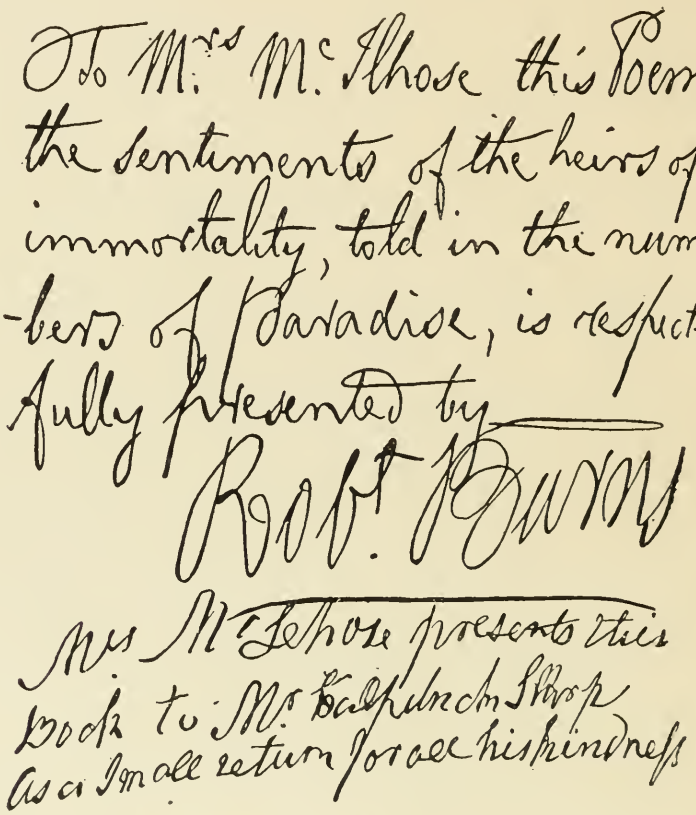
In reference to the lines on the Water-fowl at Loch Turit, after saying, as already quoted, that it was the production of a solitary forenoon's walk from Ochtertyre, he says, "I lived there Sir William's guest for two or three weeks, and was much flattered by my hospitable reception. What a pity that the mere emotions of gratitude are so impotent in this world! 'Tis lucky that, as we are told, they will be of some avail in the world to come." The poems are "Epistle to John Goudie in Kilmarnock," author of the "Gospel Recovered," August 1785; "Ode to the Departed Regency Bill," 1789; "Birthday Ode," 3rd December, 1787; "Jeremiah xv. 10;" From Clarinda, on Mr. B—— saying that "he had nothing else to do;" "Answer to the foregoing, extempore;" "A Fragment on Glenriddell's Fox Breaking his Chain."

No. VI.

THE indefatigable Dr. Grierson has presented us with the photograph of the inscription on a copy of Young's

"Night Thoughts," given by Burns to Clarinda. It has never been published before, and the original is in the possession of L. Gilchrist Clarkson, who kindly permitted Dr. Grierson to send it us.

Dr. Grierson says, "Years ago I saw three poems in Burns' own hand; one of them is the poem, "The Thames flows proudly to the Sea;" the other two were very gross, altogether unsuitable for publication. Dr.


To Mrs Mc Lehose this Poem,
the sentiments of the heirs of
immortality, told in the num-
-bers of Paradise, is respect-
fully presented by
Robt Burns

Mrs M'Lehose presents this
Book to Mr Balfour with Mr
As a small return for their kindness

Grierson quotes part of one verse, which quite proves his proposition.

No. VII.—Burns' Connection with the Excise.

In the number of *Chambers' Journal* for 27th March, 1875, there is an interesting paper, written evidently by a well-known London litterateur, a Scotchman, and a warm admirer of our Poet, in which some new facts anent the above-named subject are brought to light. Mr. MacFadzean, of the Inland Revenue Office, found in Somerset House some documents of the old Excise Office in Edinburgh bearing favourably on the treatment of the Poet by that office. He was entered on the list of promotion for the office of Supervisor on the 27th July, 1791, and he remained on it till his death. Had he lived he would have been promoted on the 12th January, 1797. His name is not mentioned for censure amid all the censures passed by the Board of Excise; and at that time the duties imposed on Excise officers were exceedingly numerous, the Amended Instructions issued in 1804 forming a volume, as large as a Family Bible, of 939 pages. None but a tolerably steady as well as active man could have adequately fulfilled the multifarious duties. An alphabetical list of the names of officers was drawn up with marginal notes, reflecting severely, many of them, on the character of the officers, calling one a "bad moral character," another, "a good officer, but now tipples;" a third, a "blundering officer," and so forth. Burns is characterized, first as "Never tryed—a Poet," with a subsequent interlineation, "turns out well;" and the worst said of him is three years afterwards, "The Poet does pretty well." This can by no means be regarded as a severe censure; it is rather complimentary. Of course a supervisorship was valued by him, chiefly as a stepping-

stone to a collectorship, which would have insured him "leisure and a little fortune." Burns never could have become a "Collector Snail" (see "Guy Mannering"); he would have continued active and unwearied; but what a blessing might competence have been to himself and his family! It might have proved, what his enemies even yet deny, that, in reference to his errors, it was his poverty and not his will which consented, and that "what seemed guilt might be but woe."

We have at present lying before us an interesting document connected with this subject. It is a copy of a Round Diary, kept by Burns' great friend, Mr. A. Findlater, of his Excise Collections for the Dumfries district. It had been shown to Robert Chambers, who thus speaks of it in a letter with which we were favoured by Mr. C. Maxwell:—"It is curious," says Mr. Chambers, "as showing Burns the only one out of a dozen officers under censure. I possess a copy of a letter of his to a Mr. Edgar of the Excise Office, April, 1795, extenuating some blame with which he was to be visited, on account of another slight failure in duty; which shows that, as might have been expected, he was not quite the most perfect gauger in the world, as well as the most brilliant Poet." In Findlater's Round Diary we find the words, "Admonished Mr. Burns," and opposite are the following words, by Findlater:—"Examined books. Hides, p. 36. A notice to draw leather, May 25th, but no account taken thereof till my survey on the 26th. Journal not entered on the 6th and 8th June by Burns. Brewery gage 157, June 4th, a cleansing of ale not regularly taken account of, but entered on the margin by Adam Stobie, supernumerary." This was the head and front of Burns' offending, for which Findlater "admonished Mr. Burns." Poor fellow! what with Daddy Auld and Supervisor Findlater, the Poet was a favourite subject of "admonition." It was Mr. Stobie, as we saw in the LIFE, who generously performed Burns' Excise work for him when he was ill, without fee or reward.

Mr. Findlater, another document we have informs us, "ranked high as a man of refined taste, of manly and generous sentiments, of glowing and enlightened patriotism, and as a public officer of excellent business habits and strict integrity." Mr. Findlater rose to the highest rank in the out-door department of the Excise, and after a meritorious service of fifty-two years, retired upon the highest superannuation allowance ever granted to a collector.

Another correspondent says, in accounting for some omission of Findlater's, not giving him one of his letters to Burns, that "he became aged and devout." He went to reside in Glasgow, and we have on our table a letter by him to a gentleman in Dundee, dated 26th October, 1839.

No. VIII.

WE gladly insert the following letter from Manchester:—

"SIR,—As the biographer of Burns, I beg to acquaint you that I am possessed of a number of relics connected with Scotia's Bard. They are the furniture from the cottage in which Burns was born, near Alloway Kirk, purchased at the sale of them in 1845, after the death of Miller Goudie, who kept the cottage open for visitors. The furniture is of the humblest description, as depicted in the *Illustrated London News* at the time of the Eglinton tournament, and covered with the names and initials of visitors. The following is a list of it:—An arm chair, two chairs, two tables, a smaller table, chest of drawers, old clock and case, corner cupboard, hand-bell, drinking horn, and toddy ladle. Also a tea-caddie and curious cup, made from 'the thorn on which Mungo's mither hanged hersel';' an autograph memorandum of Burns', five books of signatures of visitors to the cottage, and twelve chairs, put into the cottage latterly by the Miller Goudie. I have the notes of sale and other documents of identification. My father purchased the articles in 1845, and made the collection, which, I think, ought to find a place in Scotland in some depositary, public or private, devoted to the memory of the poet, whose 'Cotter's Saturday Night' was very descriptive of the homely belongings of the 'auld clay biggin'.' If you consider these unique things really interesting to you, I should be glad to know if you, or a circle of admiring Scots, could secure them from dispersion either in England or America."

No. IX.

EVERY one remembers the poetic competition in 1859, and the successful poem of Isa Craig. Besides her chaste and tasteful effusion, a number of others were published of various merit. One by Mr. James Bogue, then a teacher in Omoa Academy, near Airdrie, was too late for the prescribed time. The author sent it to us, and we had much pleasure in getting it printed in an Edinburgh newspaper, the *News*, conducted by our ingenious friend Mr. Daniel Gorrie, now of London. Although a little too allegorical in its form, it was full of real enthusiasm, and its composition showed the scholar as well as the poet. A gifted Northumberland lady, whose *nom de plume* is "Eta Mawr," has sent us recently a fine strain, recited at the Anniversary Dinner of the Burns Club, Newcastle-on-Tyne, 25th January, 1869. Ere appending it as a *Grand Finale* to our book, we may say in reference to Burns Clubs that we by no means intend to derogate from the claims of other clubs when we say, that the Edinburgh one has always been specially distinguished. Its chairmen have included, if we mistake not, such names as Professors Wilson, Blackie, and Masson, Dr. Robert Wallace, Campbell Smith, Esq., and many more, including, we think, the late lamented James Ballantine, who was at all events the soul of the institution. And we look (we

must be pardoned for saying) on it as one of the highest honours of our life that we were three times solicited to preside at this Annual Entertainment, although we were, owing to unavoidable circumstances, as often obliged most reluctantly to decline.

POETA NASCITUR.

ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF ROBERT BURNS.

The following original Ode, from the pen of Eta Mawr, the author of "Far and Near; or, Translations and Originals," was recited with loud applause at the Anniversary Dinner of the Burns Club, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, on the birthday of the Scottish Bard, the 25th of January :—

Nature would frame a poet all her own!
Her tyrant sister, Art,
In him should claim no part—
The glory should be hers, and hers *alone*!
She cast her eyes around
On all the hallowed ground
Which genius loves to haunt—
Genius, whose favours fall
Alike on cottage or on hall;
And he who hears the glorious call
Nor fortune can beguile, nor poverty can daunt!
Where shall the land be, where the clime,
Where she shall make her search sublime?
Not beneath southern skies,
Not where the Alps arise;
Though *these* her grandest scenes can show—
Though *there* her brightest aspects glow:
She turns from them
To her sea-bright gem—
Nature and freedom love to smile
Alike upon their British Isle!

And here in humble guise she sought
A child of toil and care;
A spell around his cradle wrought,
And brightened all the air.
From the bleak North
She called him forth—
It softened at her smile;
In native plaid
His limbs arrayed,
And strung his nerves to toil;
But toil that left him leisure still
With Nature's lore his heart to fill.
His very *name* had charms for *her*—
The "wimpling *burns*," his native streams,
With their wild music fancy stir,
And weave melodious dreams!
She led him by the hand
O'er all th' enchanted land,
And bade his infant lyre
To sound her praise aspire;
Dear were to her his "woodnotes wild,"
And dear the mother to the child!

She steeped his soul in tenderness—the flower,
The wayside flower, his delving share upturned,*
The thistle's self, in which he scanned
The emblem of his native land,
By others trampled on or spurned,
A train of patriot thoughts awoke—a tender pity earned.†
The tiny tenant of the field,‡
With palpitating heart,
Did he from injury shield,
And bid in peace depart.
All Nature's children had a charm
His kindred soul to melt;
All that had life his heart could warm—
For all that *feel* he felt.

Nor only did the *sadder* Muse
Bestow her touching strain!
Full oft the *comic* he would choose
Too woo—nor woo in vain.
And humour grave and mirthful wit,
Along the sportive chords would flit—
Wit that, like Falstaff's, could inspire
A kindred vein—contagious fire—
And wit in others wake;§
Teach Sculpture, hitherto confined
To grand embodiments of mind,
A humbler phase to take;
In "Tam o' Shanter," "Souter John"—
Plebeian garb for once put on,
Descending, for his sake,
Yet find, amazed, that humble life
With equal fame for her was rife.
She gave the shapes the bard had shown
An immortality in stone,
And shared for aye the undying praise
Which hovers o'er that poet's lays.

Ah! that he lived not—as he might—
To see such genuine meed requite;‖
Beyond all fame to him, I ween,
Had such congenial tribute been.
Yes! mourn, with me, the cruel fate
That ever on the bard doth wait,
Whose fatal motto is—Too Late!
Too Late! Too Late!—Those words of woe
From each true poet's pen may flow;
For never does he see below
The fame he shall attain;

* "Wee, modest, crimson-tipped flower," &c.

† Burns says in one of his letters, that he never could see a thistle in bloom but he turned aside his plough, and spared his country's emblem. What exquisite delicacy of feeling in an untaught son of the soil!

‡ The field-mouse.

§ Falstaff says he was not only witty himself, but inspired wit in others.—See Henry IV. Shakspeare.

‖ Had Burns lived to the common age of man, he would long have survived the production of the celebrated figures of "Tam o' Shanter" and "Souter John," and rejoiced, doubtless, in so admirable an embodiment of his ideas.

And doubt and fear distract his breast,
By cold Oblivion's dread opprest,
Till, sinking to his final rest,
It comes, for *him*, in vain!

Too sad the theme! Ah, turn away
And wake for him a loftier lay;
For Nature still has balm to heal
The pangs her gifted children feel,
And soothe fate's keenest sting.
She fired his soul with patriot flame,
A glory o'er his country's name,
In ages past, to fling.
For they who for their country bleed
Have ne'er received their crowning meed
Till their country's poets sing.
See! rising from their gory bed,
The Scots who once with Wallace bled,
The Scots whom Bruce so often led,
Salute their gifted son;
Lo! in his strain
They live again,
A second race of glory run.
And bright the halo round them shed;
For every line
A wreath doth twine,
A deathless wreath of fame, for each devoted head.

Yet pause to bless the God of peace,
Who bade those cruel contests cease
That tore the sister lands;
And blending even in war their hands,
Rends not from one pale bleeding brow
The garland for the other now—
The garland which they jointly claim.
In union of immortal fame,
Knit fast in concord's bands.
The Scots that once for Wallace bled
For England now their blood would shed,
England would bleed for *them*!
In BRITAIN'S blending name they close
Those dire divisions, countless woes;
The Northern Thistle, Southern Rose,
Now blooming on one stem.
Still may their serried ranks oppose
One dauntless front to their country's foes,
Her thunders hurling from afar;
Still may they labour, hand in hand,
At home t' exalt each happy land,
And join, as now, in feasts of peace, not less than feats of war!

Hush the loud clarion's note!
List the low tones that float
To sorrow's ear!
Breathe soft in solemn dirge
Sounds that from heaven's high verge
Angels may stoop to hear!
So free from earthly taint
The undying love they paint,
So pure the poet's tear!
But let the woe be brief,
Sublimed from earthly leaven.
Ah! why for thee feel grief—
"Mary—in Heaven!"

Nor only passion's purest form
The soul of Nature's bard could warm;
Domestic love! thou, too, hast claims
On kindred hearts and kindred names.
How sweetly thrill the poet's strings,
A pious father when he sings;
And where has Nature fitter place
Than bending at the throne of grace?
Draw near with reverence! on the earth
No holier sight is seen:
The worship of the heart and hearth,
Where angel steps have been;
The steps of virtue's hallowed train,
That o'er a humble household reign.
The patriarch of the cottage dome
Unfolds the Bible's ample tome—
The Bible of his sires!
He calls to prayer! responsive hearts
In silence take their several parts,
And each impressive word to heaven's high court aspires.

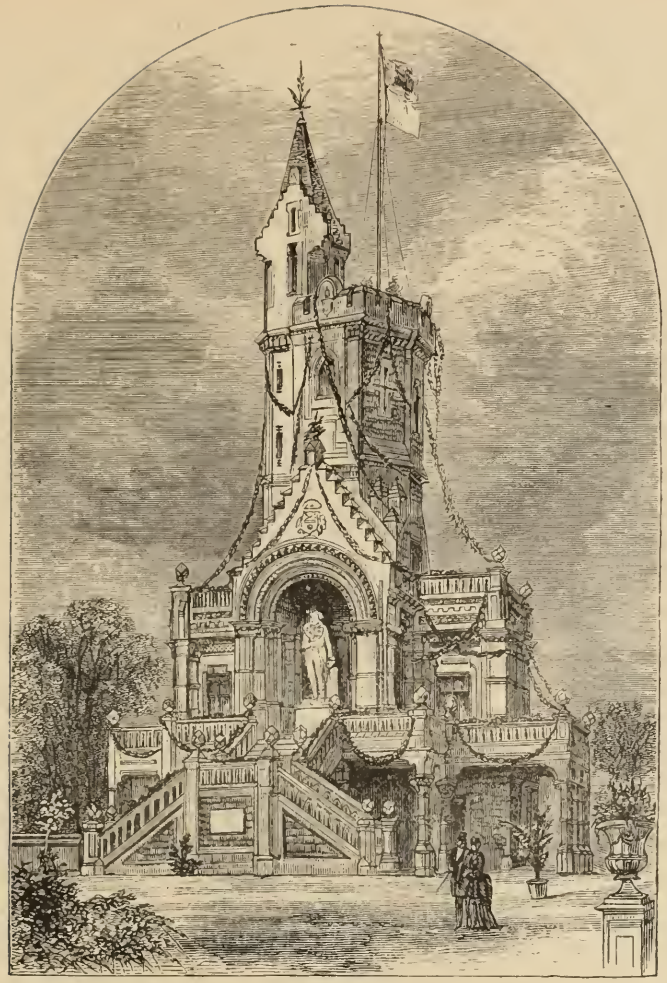
And earthly friendship, warm and true,
A glory o'er the minstrel threw,
Reflected from his line;
As hands and hearts, locked firm and fast,
Around the cup of kindness passed
"For auld lang syne!"
Ah! from the Arctic to the zone,*
That song to Northern hearts is known;
A spell that shall for ever last,
To bind the present to the past
In friendship's cordial growth;
Nor less the Southern Briton feels
The sighs it draws, the tear it steals—
The smile that chases both!
That links, from youth's to age's span,
The heart of brother man to man.
Had he but breathed that strain alone,
The bard had made all hearts his own!

Then Nature on her minstrel smiled,
And owned him for her favourite child.
She clasped her chosen to her heart—
My son, my son, we ne'er will part!
Or grave or gay, thy heart my throne,
Still beats responsive to my own.
Whoe'er the race of glory run,
Still Burns shall be my favourite son;

* The Rev. J. Jeffrey, in his speech at the Anniversary Dinner, Newcastle, relates, that "being present, a few years ago, at a banquet given to some high dignitaries of the State, in the capital of an ancient Northern Kingdom, when the name of Burns happened at random to be mentioned it was received by those distinguished foreigners with a burst of heartfelt appreciation and applause. They all knew his name, and they all had read and admired his writings—so true are the often-quoted words, 'One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.' And of none do these words hold good more thoroughly than of the peasant poet, Burns."

My rival sister well may claim
A share in every glorious name—
  In all save thine alone.
Fair are the works of Art,
But here she hath no part—
  Yes, thou art all my own.
  Kneel then before my throne,
  Receive the garland won!
From her own brow the bays she drew,
All bright with vernal dew;
Round *his* the garland wreathed,
And on the fadeless leaves immortal verdure breathed!

A hundred years have rolled away.
  And many another wreath been won;
But he whom Nature crowned that day
  Is still *her* favourite son.
Behold another century rise,
And still he claims and keeps the prize,
  By *her* sole hand assigned.
Far distant is that century's goal—
Fresh minstrels rise as ages roll—
  Fresh phases of the mind;
But when its goal is reached, e'en then shall Burns, as now,
Be Nature's Laureate Bard—her POET OF THE PLOUGH!



CENTENARY OF FIRST EDITION OF BURNS,

Celebrated at Kilmarnock, August 7, 1886.

IN the famous "Vision" of Burns, in which Coila crowns the "rustic bard" with "the polished leaves and berries red" of the rustling holly, occur these lines:—

> "Low, in a sandy valley spread,
> An ancient burgh rear'd her head;
> Still, as in Scottish story read,
> She boasts a race,
> To ev'ry nobler virtue bred,
> And polish'd grace."

They refer to Ayr, situated at the mouth of the river of the same name, which, together with the neighbouring Doon, the poet has made as immortal as the Simois, the Scamander, the Tiber, or the Rhine. Archibald M'Kay, the painstaking historian of his native town, has transferred the reference to Kilmarnock, in the vale of the Irvine, substituting "fertile" for "sandy" to make the expression and the fact agree. It, too, is an "ancient burgh," familiar to all from numerous and interesting associations, but from none more so than that from its modest provincial press was issued in the end of July, 1786, "Poems chiefly in the Scottish dialect," by Robert Burns, a facsimile of which we give on next page. On the 25th of January, 1859, the centenary of the poet's birth was celebrated at Kilmarnock, as elsewhere, and the meeting, presided over

THE

TWA DOGS,

A

TALE.

'TWAS in that place o' Scotland's iſle,
That bears the name o' auld king
COIL,
Upon a bonie day in June,
When wearing thro' the afternoon,
Twa Dogs, that were na thrang at hame,
Forgather'd ance upon a time.

A

The firſt I'll name, they ca'd him *Cæſar*,
Was keepet for His Honor's pleaſure;
His hair, his ſize, his mouth, his lugs,
Shew'd he was nane o' Scotland's dogs,
But whalpet ſome place far abroad,
Where ſailors gang to fiſh for Cod.

His locked, letter'd, braw braſs-collar
Shew'd him the *gentleman* an' *ſcholar*;
But tho' he was o' high degree,
The fient a pride na pride had he,
But wad hae ſpent an hour careſſan,
Ev'n wi' a Tinkler-gipſey's *meſſan*:
At Kirk or Market, Mill or Smiddie,
Nae tawted *tyke*, tho' e'er ſae duddie,
But he wad ſtan't, as glad to ſee him,
An' ſtroan't on ſtanes an' hillocks wi' him.

The tither was a *ploughman's collie*,
A rhyming, ranting, raving billie,
Wha for his friend an' comrade had him,
And in his freaks had *Luath* ca'd him,

by the provost of the day, was an undoubted success. But on Saturday, 7th August, 1886, was celebrated another centenary, that of the original publication of his works, which was a much greater success, and in it the good old town could have no rival, the honour of it being shared by none. It was necessarily all her own. Therefore, she could well afford to

"Cock her tail
And toss her horns fu' canty."

The printer of the poems was John Wilson, whose establishment was in what is now named Waterloo Street. John is erroneously supposed to be the "Wee Johnnie" of a well-known epigram, which, like most of the epigrams from the pen of Burns, is simply execrable—conceived and executed in the worst possible taste. When Burns undertook to publish his poems he was comparatively a youth (twenty-seven years of age), and in the most desperate circumstances, the details of which will be found in the subjoined speech of Sheriff Hall at the banquet which closed the day's proceedings. Wilson would not be looked "at" by Burns in his then circumstances so much as looked "up to," as the possible arbiter of his tottering fortunes. And Wilson was above all things a shrewd, cool-headed business man, the architect of so considerable a fortune that he was able to leave a handsome sum for the education of poor children in Kilmarnock, which is still administered as the Wilson Trust. He would not likely therefore print his own condemnation "to eternal fame," nor would even the daring Mossgiel ploughman, at that time, and in the circumstances, have ventured on the injudicious and ungrateful experiment. The poet having resolved on emigrating to Jamaica, required £20 for passage and outfit, and to procure this sum his friend Gavin Hamilton of Mauchline advised him to publish his poems. "At the worst," he wrote, "the roar of the Atlantic would deafen the voice of censure, and the novelty of West Indian scenes make me forget neglect." The prospectus was issued from John Wilson's press in Kilmarnock; 350 of the 600 copies were subscribed for; and the volume was given to the public at the end of July, 1786. "My vanity was highly gratified by the reception I met with from the public; and, besides, I pocketed, all expenses deducted, nearly £20. . . . . As soon as I was master of nine guineas I took a steerage passage in the first ship that was to sail from the Clyde. . . . . I had taken the last farewell of my friends; my chest was on the road to Greenock; I had composed the last song I should ever measure in Caledonia, 'The gloomy night is gathering fast,' when a letter from Dr. Blacklock to a friend of mine overthrew all my schemes by opening new prospects to my poetic ambition." The sequel is well known to all.

The Kilmarnock edition, of 227 pages of poetry, and a glossary, was printed on good, strong, corded paper, demy octavo, and was bound in coarse blue wrappers. The edition consisted of 612 copies at 3*s.* each. Three hundred and fifty were subscribed for, and the remainder disposed of within a few weeks. The above extract from the poet's letter to Dr. Moore, which is dated Mauchline, 22nd August, 1787, suggests a few remarks. The late Robert Chambers discovered among the papers of Robert Cole, a London collector, Wilson's original account for printing the Kilmarnock edition, of which the following is a verbatim copy:—

Mr. Robert Burns

To John Wilson, *Dr.*

Aug. 28, 1786.—Printing 15 sheets at 19*s.*			£14	5 0
19 reams 13 quires of paper at 17*s.* .			16	4 0
Carriage of the paper			0	8 9
Stitching 612 copies in blue paper at 1¾*d.*			4	9 3
			£35	17 0
Aug. 19	By Cash	£6 3 0		
23	do.	14 13 0		
	By 70 copies	10 10 0	£31	6 0
			£4	11 0
	By 9 copies		1	7 0
			£3	4 0
Oct. 6	By cash in full		3	4 0

Kilmarnock—Settled the above account,

John Wilson.

It will be observed that in the second item Wilson undercharged Burns, the proper account being £16 14*s.*, and not £16 4*s.* But Wilson was no dolt. The account here given was evidently a copy from memoranda; for while the second item is extended 10*s.* short, the summation is quite accurate, including the 10*s.* Again, 600 copies at 3*s.* would produce £90; therefore the poet should have pocketed, "all expenses deducted," a good deal more than £20; but he may have incurred debt while he was under hiding in the Forest of Old Rome, which he hastened to liquidate as soon as he became possessed of cash. In the body of the work, and not in the usual place, occurs a "Dedication to G—— H——" (Gavin Hamilton). His friends came nobly to his assistance as regards the matter of subscribing. Mr. Aitken of Ayr, the father of that Andrew Aitken for whose guidance was written in May the admirable epistle beginning, "I lang hae thought, my youthfu' friend," gets 145 copies, nearly a fourth of the entire impression, between the 31st of July and the 16th of August. Robert Muir of Kilmarnock, between 2nd August and the subsequent fortnight, gets 72 copies; James Smith of Mauchline, whose exploits in the domain of Venus his Mossgiel friend chronicled with injudicious gusto and minuteness, from first to last gets 41; Gavin Hamilton, 40; Kennedy of Dumfries House, 20; Logan of Laight, 20; M'Whinnie, 20; Gilbert Burns, 70, &c., &c. So successfully had matters gone that on 28th August, less than a month after the publication of the

volume, only fifteen copies were left on hand. And this was not in the days of librarians like Moodie, who can safely pilot an edition of a work some months before its publication. The book captivated the public ear at once. The unfortunate Robert Heron writes that he got the book at night, and that he lay awake till he had read it through. "Even ploughboys and maid-servants," he added, "would have gladly bestowed their hardly-earned wages if they might but procure the works of Burns." But we must take this *cum grano*, as the inference of an extreme man.

The origin of the movement for this centenary celebration is to be dated from the meeting held in the George Hotel, Kilmarnock, August, 1883, when the Burns Library of James M'Kie, the well-known printer of the facsimile of the Kilmarnock edition, was handed over to the corporation to be deposited in the Monument Museum in the Kay Park. The idea was first mooted by Mr. Colin Rae Brown, a west country Scot resident in London, and president of the London Burns Club, who was present at this meeting. He suggested that Kilmarnock had a great opportunity in the near distance of creating "a red-letter day" at once for the burgh and the bard, as the centenary of the publication of the first edition of the poet's works was rapidly approaching. The idea recommended itself at once to the audience, the chief magistrate being "of opinion that the celebration suggested by Mr. Brown would be an event of even greater moment than the celebration of the centenary of the birth." On Friday, 17th July, 1885, Mr. Brown presided in the "George" at a meeting called to organize a federation of Burns Clubs over the world, and it was arranged that the federation council should, when formed, co-operate with the Kilmarnock Burns Club in making preparations for the due celebration of the First Edition Centenary during the first week of August, 1886, the centenary of the week in which the poems were sent out to subscribers in 1786.

The weather, unpromising in the morning, became fine early in the day, and continued so. The town, by the exertions of the committee charged with the arrangements, early assumed the aspect of a gala day. Numerous flags were displayed from public buildings, streamers and bannerets were stretched across the main thoroughfares, and the statue of Sir James Shaw, a native who had risen to the elevation of the Lord Mayorship of London, was decked with wreaths of evergreens. It was calculated that the early trains brought to the town some 10,000 or 11,000 excursionists, who, with the natives and neighbours who turned out to honour the occasion, formed a total of from 20,000 to 30,000, according to conflicting calculations. The Burns statue, and the Reformers' Monument in the Kay Park, were adorned with evergreens and floral devices, and a wreath sent by a native of the town, now a florist in Edinburgh, was placed round the neck of the statue. The procession, formed on Barbadoes Green, left for the park at twelve o'clock, the several sections headed by instrumental bands.

The following is the official programme :—

BURNS DEMONSTRATION.

Kilmarnock, 7th August, 1886.

In Commemoration of the Publication of the First Edition of the "Poems chiefly in the Scottish Dialect."

PROGRAMME OF THE DAY'S PROCEEDINGS.

AT 12 NOON, PROCESSION—comprising the Farmers, Ploughmen, and Carters on horseback; Town Council, Kay Park Trustees, Burns Monument Committee, Demonstration Committee; Pipers of the Royal Caledonian Asylum, London (escorting the young ladies with their wreaths of daisies), the Federated Burns Clubs, other Burns Clubs, characters immortalized by the poet, the Trades of Kilmarnock and neighbourhood, Foresters, Free Gardeners, Freemasons, &c.—will start from Barbadoes Green, Dundonald Road, and proceed by John Finnie Street, West George Street, Portland Street, King Street, Queen Street, Sturrock Street, Green Street, London Road, Holehouse Road, and Kay Park Terrace, to the Kay Park.

At 1.30 the Young Ladies will complete the Daisy Ovation at the Monument.

At 2, J. H. Stoddart, Esq., LL.D., will deliver an address from the Band Stand near the Monument.

At 2.30, Grand Open-air Concert in Kay Park, in which nearly 1000 Voices will take part. Conductor, Mr. W. H. Dixon. The Band of the 4th Battalion Royal Scots Fusiliers and the Juvenile Pipers of the Royal Caledonian Asylum, London.

At 5, Banquet in Corn Exchange Hall, Provost Sturrock (President of the Burns Federation) chairman. Sheriff Hall will deliver an address. Croupiers — Colin Rae Brown, Esq., President London Burns Club; David Pryde, Esq., LL.D., President Edinburgh Burns Club; Preceptor Wilson, Glasgow Western Burns Club; D. D. Leitch, Esq., President Belfast Burns Club; Rev. W. Dunnett, M.A., President Kilmarnock Burns Club.

The Pipers from London and Band of the Royal Scots Fusiliers will perform a special selection of Music during the Banquet.

DAVID SNEDDON,
Convener of Procession Committee.

Some incidents connected with the procession may be mentioned. On the march from Barbadoes Green, when the Laigh Kirk Mission Hall, John Finnie Street, was reached, 150 young girls, each carrying a wreath of daisies, a votive offering to be made at the shrine of the poet,

joined it; and at the George Hotel it was joined by the Demonstration Committee, and by deputations from the Federated Burns Clubs, including, along with home clubs, representatives from Australia and New Zealand. A nephew of Highland Mary, Archibald Campbell, one of the representatives of the Greenock Club, a hale, active, venerable-looking man of seventy-two, was among the processionists. At the close of the banquet he was presented with a cheque, which would enable him to get a few comforts to cheer his declining years, and the gift was briefly but suitably acknowledged. When the park, entered by the south gate, was reached, the band of girls broke off, and proceeding to the monument, laid their floral tribute at the feet of the statue, amid the cheers of the assembled onlookers. By half-past one the last of the procession had reached the park. A stand, or platform, had been erected in the Clerk's Holm, and east of it, and in its very vicinity, arose a natural amphitheatre, crowded by thousands of happy holiday-makers, while on the south a range of seats, a gallery, had been erected to accommodate about 1000 vocalists, who were to render the most popular and characteristic songs of Burns, under the most competent leading. Provost Sturrock, who presided, introduced J. H. Stoddart, LL.D., Editor of the *Glasgow Herald*, the orator of the day, who thus spoke :—

Ladies and gentlemen, I have to congratulate this great gathering of the people of the West of Scotland on the important event we are commemorating. I am afraid my voice will fall far short of reaching you all in the few remarks I am about to make, and I hope you will be patient under the circumstances and the infliction. Well, it is a great event in every sense of the word. We are here to celebrate and commemorate the publication in this town of Kilmarnock, about one hundred years ago, of a small volume of poems; and it seems to me that so far as our native country is to be considered, that was one of the most momentous events that ever occurred in our literary history. Perhaps you will recollect that in the epoch-marking volume published in your town there is an elegy—one of the finest elegies ever written—on the death of "Tam Samson." Burns exhausted all the wealth of language—the wealth of the Ayrshire dialect—in describing the abounding virtues of his friend, and called on every flower, on every animate creature—as John Milton did in the "Lycidas"—to mourn the death of this gallant sportsman. And this elegy is touched with exquisite humour as well as pathos, a humour and a pathos that Burns himself only perhaps partially understood. You remember also that Burns, in his postscript to the elegy, says :—

> "Gae, fame, and canter like a filly
> Through every street and neuk o' Killie,
> Tell every sonsy honest billy
> To stap his grievin',
> For yet, unscathed by death's gleg gully,
> Tam Samson's lievin'."

In correspondence with the humorous intention of the bard, we may, a hundred years after these lines were published, apply them to Burns himself. We have sadly mourned his early death, but he is still living in spirit and in the hearts of his countrymen everywhere, and that little volume of his, with the glorious additions that were afterwards made to it, forms the passport of immortality to Robert Burns. The great bard's fame still canters, not merely "through every street and neuk o' Killie," but has bounded onwards to every corner of the civilized world. Well, it would be presumptuous on my part to discuss before a Kilmarnock audience the biography of the poems of Robert Burns. There is an old friend of mine here to-day who can tell you far more about the many editions—the legitimate and illegitimate descendants of the Kilmarnock press—of Robert Burns's works than I can, my friend Mr. James M'Kie. And I am not here to speak of these, but rather of the importance and the significance in our national life of the first edition of Burns's poems, printed and published by an enterprising local printer, the famous "Wee Johnnie" of your town. Now, from the beginning of the eighteenth century till Robert Burns's poems appeared in its last quarter, there was really only one Scottish poet who had made any impression upon the people of Scotland, and that poet was Allan Ramsay. Allan Ramsay was a true exponent of Scottish feeling so far as his capability went, and he did good service by unearthing some of our older literature that had practically fallen into oblivion. I am not going to say a word against "honest Allan!" His "Gentle Shepherd" can still be read, though it is now far out of date; and some of his songs are still sung, and deserve to be sung for all time; but in other respects he is the poet in homespun of the upper and cultivated classes. He is a diminutive Scottish Horace, who took life easy and passionless, drinking toddy instead of Falernian, a much more potent spirit, but not bringing with it the inspiration that the Falernian gave to the Roman bard. Allan accurately enough describes his person and his purpose when he calls himself

> "A black-a-viced snod dapper fallow,
> Nor lean, nor overlaid with tallow;"

whose aim was to

> "Theek the out and line the inside
> O' mony a douce and witty pash,
> And baith ways gather in the cash."

But besides this little Edinburgh barber and poet, we have hardly another light in Scotland proceeding from the soil till Burns made his appearance. We have Ferguson, whom Burns commiserated, and did what none of the poet's patrons thought of doing—placed a headstone over his grave—but poor Ferguson's genius sank almost in embryo. And when we look upward to the higher literary world of Scotland in those days, what do we find? Great talents, great correctness of language, displayed in a literature only known and appreciated by the educated. We have the funereal verses of Blair's "Grave;" we have a few genuine lines from James Beattie, Hamilton, Logan, and others; we have the histories of Robertson—great and able works; and we have the surpassing metaphysical genius of David Hume; and, as for the rest, we have the theological wranglings and embitterments of the Old and New Lights, the Moderates and the Evangelicals. This was a period of practical deadness in our national life. There was no enthusiasm—there was hardly any stir, except among the ranks of the theologians. The great mass of the people of Scotland were living lives untouched by the purer fires of patriotism and genius. It is one of the dullest periods of our history. I do not by any means say it was the most unhappy. While making great material progress Scotland was girded round, spiritually and intellectually, with fanatical and superstitious bonds. I could not agree with the late Mr. Buckle when he declared that, next to Spain, Scotland was the most superstitious and priest-ridden country in Europe. The man who could make such a statement knew nothing of the work which Robert Burns accomplished for the people of Scotland; but I should say that before this volume of Burns was published, one hundred years ago, Mr. Buckle's strong assertion would then have been worthier of more credence. I shall not dwell upon that point, but rather call attention to the general deadness of social, political, and literary life which had fallen upon our country previous to the appearance of Robert Burns. When this volume of his was issued from the Kilmarnock press new vitality began to awaken in the dry bones. You remember the beautiful story of the enchanted palace with the Sleeping Beauty, where all had been spell-bound in forgetfulness for a hundred years. And you remember that when the warrior knight, the genius of his mythical age, came to the slumbering castle, drew his sword and wound the horn, immediately the sleep of a hundred years was broken, the Sleeping Beauty awoke in all the splendour of youth and loveliness, and the whole earth was alive with the vigour of new life and action. Such was the effect of the publication of Burns's first volume of poems upon his countrymen. Scotland awoke from her long lethargy. The intellectual virility and the passionate ardour of her sons received a new and powerful impetus. It would take me far too long a time, and would try your patience to an outrageous degree, were

I to attempt to describe what I believe to be the results which followed from the assertion through the Kilmarnock press of the genius of our great countryman. He spoke from a heart glowing with the hottest passion of love, of patriotism, and he spoke with detestation of meanness, hypocrisy, and cant, to a people prepared to thrill at every word, at every homely but divine line of his verses. He came to a people prepared, or, if not prepared, ready to listen. There was an accent of familiarity in his verses, perhaps there were ideas in them, of which the people themselves were dimly conscious, but which now flamed forth as bright as the stars at night, or as the noon-day sun. What wonder was it if in a few years the poems of Robert Burns were as well known in the peasant cottages and the bothies of Scotland as the Shorter Catechism? Do not doubt but that these poems had a strong educative influence upon the mind of the peasantry of Scotland. They allayed fanaticism, and whatever harm some of these poems may have done—and I do not deny the harm in many cases—the influence was intellectually and morally stimulative and essentially good. Well, the Kilmarnock publication did not by any means exhaust the genius of our great Ayrshire ploughman. Far from it. Some of his best works followed, and, chief among them, those songs which shall last as long as our language endures. But here, the great voice spoke first, and from this spot Scotland first felt the spell of his words. It is meet that we should celebrate such a great centenary, and whatever our critics may say—and we shall have many sneering critics, for whom we do not care much—I think I may say this much, that the first work—the first hostage that a great man gives to his country of the worth that is in him—is as worthy of commemoration as the day of his birth or the day of his death. I will conclude by quoting to you two vigorous, though hardly grammatical, lines, which were given by Lord Houghton at the unveiling of the Burns statue on the Thames Embankment—

> "Scotland shall flourish while her children learns
> The Psalms of David and the Songs of Burns."

The oration, listened to with great attention and admiration, was only imperfectly heard by those on the platform, the audience in the amphitheatre, though much more remote, hearing greatly better. One or two features of the procession may be added here. Immediately behind the leading horsemen, the marshals, and the rest, came a lorry, drawn by eight Clydesdale horses, decorated with flowers and evergreens, and upon it was the New Cumnock brass band. Next came the carters, sixty strong, horses and riders bedecked with ribbons, the men all wearing Tam o' Shanter bonnets. The butchers followed, mounted on ponies. This is chronicling small beer, but a historical narrative must, for the sake of reference, and of those who are to follow and consult, be historical. Burns at the plough was represented by a young farmer on the Portland Estate, placed on a lorry drawn by five Clydesdale horses, himself got up as accurately as was possible to represent the Ayrshire ploughman. On the front part of the lorry, on which two furs of turf were spread, stood two horses held by a "gadsman," and attached to the horses was a plough, as nearly as possible representing the form of the plough used in Burns's day. A detachment of farmers and ploughmen came next, bedecked after the manner of the carters. Then followed a lorry drawn by three horses, and conveying a representation of Poosie Nancy's public house in Mauchline, with the "Jolly Beggars" seated round a table enjoying the "carouse." Tam o' Shanter and Souter Johnnie enjoying themselves, as tradition has it, followed in another vehicle. Freemasons, Foresters, and employees of local firms, with samples of their craft, followed, and "all went merry as a marriage bell."

After Dr. Stoddart's speech the open air concert followed. It lasted fully three hours, and was highly enjoyed by the vast audience. Its spirit and taste can be best illustrated by giving the programme—

Choir, ...	"There was a lad was born in Kyle."
,, ...	"Duncan Gray."
Band.—Overture,	"Rob Roy." . . . . —*Foster.*
Pipers.—March, .	"Cock o' the North."
,, Strathspey,	"Sandy King."
,, Reel, .	"The Rejected Suitor."
Band, ...	"Fantasia on Jacobite Airs."—*Gassner.*
Choir, ...	"Ye Banks and Braes."
,, ...	"A man's a man for a' that."
Pipers.—March, .	"The M'Kenzie Highlanders."
,, Strathspey,	"Brechin Castle."
,, Reel, .	"Kail and Puddings."
Band.—Selection,	"Reminiscences of Scotland."—*Godfrey.*
Choir, ...	"Green grow the Rashes, O!"
,, ...	"Scots wha ha'e."
Pipers.—March, .	"We've aye been provided for."
Band.—Fantasia,	"Robert Bruce." . . —*Boniseau.*
Choir, ...	"Corn Rigs."
,, ...	"Auld Lang Syne."
Pipers.—March, .	"The Heights of Alma."
,, ...	"Miss Drummond of Perth."
,, ...	"Mrs. M'Leod of Raasay."

The band of the 4th Battalion Scots Fusiliers, and the boys from the Caledonian Asylum, London (bagpipers), played selected pieces, as the programme shows, between the vocal renderings.

The banquet took place at five o'clock in the Corn Exchange Hall, Provost Sturrock presiding. He was supported by Burns enthusiasts from all quarters. The toast of the evening was proposed by Sheriff Hall, the local supreme magistrate. We give his speech, an admirable one, *in extenso*. The subject was "The Memory of Burns." He said—

The toast which I have been honoured by having had put into my hands on this great occasion is "The Memory of Burns," and though I am conscious that I can say nothing about it which has not been said, and better said, to-day already, I have at the same time the satisfaction of knowing that it is a toast which, in an assembly of Scottish men and Scottish women, must always, however weakly, or with however much repetition it may be presented, command an enthusiastic reception. "The Memory of Burns" is indeed a theme of perennial interest to his countrymen and countrywomen in every quarter of the globe. Year after year the illustrious poet whom we are proud to recognize as our national bard is in "our flowing cups freshly remembered." But the present occasion has in relation to Burns, and especially to Kilmarnock, a unique and entirely peculiar interest. We are not now met, as often before, to commemorate the birth of Burns. That anniversary, I need not say, falls in a season much more typical of the cold cheer which was his destined portion in life, than such comparatively genial weather as we are now enjoying. When we drink to the memory of Burns this evening we do so in connection with, and in celebration of, the hundredth birthday of a book which has made that memory immortal, and which was ushered into the world almost exactly one hundred years ago through the kindly intervention of a Kilmarnock publisher. One hundred years ago, on the 31st July, 1786, three years before the outbreak of the French Revolution, there issued from the press of John Wilson, Kilmarnock, known to fame as "Wee Johnnie," a small octavo volume of 240 pages, entitled "Poems,

chiefly in the Scottish dialect, by Robert Burns," and one of the greatest events in the history of literature thus quietly transacted itself in this remote country town. Three shillings was the original price of a book for the few extant copies of which the curious in such matters are now glad to pay twenty times that number of pounds. The appearance of the volume has been made generally known by the *fac-simile* reprints of our respected townsman, Mr. M'Kie. I have seen it described as a "coarse edition"; but I think, on the contrary, that the manner in which it is got up reflects great credit on the Kilmarnock press of the period. It is well printed on good paper, with margins of luxuriant amplitude. In fact, it is altogether so much superior to what we should naturally have expected of the place and time as almost to suggest a presentiment on the part of the publisher that, unlikely as it might seem, it was really one of the world's classics on which his obscure industry was employed. Burns had been a rhymer from his boyhood, and within his own limited circle his poetical reputation was already established. Had not Coila, as we read in the "Vision," crowned him her laureate for the district of Kyle over which she presided? But he was now to launch his barque on a wider sea, where the kindly influences of friendship, good fellowship, and common neighbourhood could little avail him or materially further the success of his voyage. Most of the poems contained in the Kilmarnock edition appear to have been written in the years 1785 and 1786. I need hardly remind you of the painful circumstances which immediately led to their collection and publication, and which have left a deep mark on the contents of the volume itself. Burns was only twenty-seven years old, but he was already "weary with disasters, tugged with fortune." In the spring of 1786 his affairs had apparently come to a crisis. There was, on the one hand, the failure of his farming speculation at Mossgiel; on the other the sad, miserable story of his intrigue with Jean Armour. Poverty, which had always been his companion, seemed darkening into utter ruin, and remorse, blighted affection, and wounded pride combined with its base entanglements to drive his sensitive and haughty spirit to despair. He resolved to fly. A situation was obtained for him in the West Indies, and it was to procure the necessary funds for his outfit and passage money that he flung down before the world the handful of poems which, in such intervals of leisure as he could snatch from a life of incessant toil, he had written for his own amusement and solace, without any view to publication. The agony of mind which preceded and inspired the resolution to uproot himself from his "ill-willy" native soil is reflected in the "Lament," the odes to "Despondency" and "Ruin," and other productions of that unhappy time. Yet the resolution once taken there is evidence that the clouds began to lighten, and symptoms of returning cheerfulness make themselves apparent. Burns loved Scotland dearly, but he was young, he had the spirit of enterprise common to his countrymen, and even in the tropics there was still room for hope. Then, too, there was the novel interest and excitement attendant on the publication of the poems. We may fancy the tall, stalwart figure of the young peasant, with his great, flashing black eyes, as he trudged in the bright, summer weather, through the labyrinthine streets of old Kilmarnock to the Cross to see how Wilson was getting on with the printing. His appearance attracted little attention then, though probably more than, circumstanced as he was—for he was practically under hiding—he cared to encounter; but we need not doubt that, as sheet after sheet was thrown off from the press, and he saw the offspring of his brain first taking shape as literature, the memory of his troubles was lost in the delighted consciousness of authorship, and in the sanguine anticipation of distinction at least, and possible renown, for Burns was by no means ignorant of the value of the work which he and "Wee Johnnie" were jointly, though in very unequal proportions, engaged in producing. We have only to read the preface which he prefixed to it to remove all doubt on this point. He makes his rustic bow with haughty modesty, not confident, indeed, or careless, as to his reception, but disclaiming the slighest show of deference or servility, as conscious of an internal worth which was beyond the reach of the world's praise or censure. His lofty bearing towards the public, whose judgment he challenged, offers a singular contrast to the extraordinary humility with which here, as always, he speaks of Ramsay and Fergusen, two of his precursors in the cultivation of the Scottish Muse. We are reminded of the extravagant encomiums which Scott, in like manner, invariably bestows on Miss Edgeworth and other writers very inferior to himself, who had preceded him in the same field. There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of either Burns or Scott in this self-disparagement, preposterous as it now seems to us. In the case of Burns it is very intelligible. He had read the works of his predecessors in the first ardour of youthful enthusiasm, when it was almost inevitable that he should "piece out their imperfections" from the fulness of his own nature, and his estimate of them in after-life continued to take its colour from that original impression. The Kilmarnock edition is, of course, not a complete collection of the poetry of Burns. Much of his best works, of what constitutes his most indefeasible title to immortality, belongs to a later period. Of the songs, that marvellous many-branched fountain of melody, in which every phase and mood of human sentiment and passion finds its appropriate utterance, nearly all are wanting. We miss also the weird and almost savage satire on the poor Tarbolton schoolmaster, known as "Death and Dr. Hornbook," though that, I believe, was already written; and the still more weird, and in every way much more remarkable tale of "diablerie" with which, under the name of "Tam o' Shanter," all the world is familiar, in which Burns's narrative and descriptive powers reach perhaps their highest point. Nor can I forbear to note the absence of the cantata of the "Jolly Beggars," a work for which allowances, no doubt, require to be made, but in which it is not too much to say that the genius of Burns has ennobled a subject so unpromising as the nocturnal orgies of a company of tramps into a veritable gem of lyrical and dramatic art. But with such weighty and important exceptions as I have indicated, all the poems by which Burns is best known meet us here in this his first edition. We have, for example, the social strictures, shrewd, if naturally somewhat cynical, of the "Twa Dogs," the riotous bacchanalian rhapsody of "Scotch Drink," the wicked but highly amusing raillery of the "Holy Fair," the grotesque and appalling familiarity of the "Address to the Deil," the noble and beautiful poem of the "Vision," and the admirably graphic picture of what may be termed the Scottish "Walpurgis Nacht" in "Hallowe'en." We have above all "The Cottar's Saturday Night," that most perfect idyll in any literature, which contrasts with the "Holy Fair" in that they respectively exhibit the positive and negative poles of Burns's mental attitude towards the religious beliefs and observances of his country. Though we seem to trace some echoes of Gray's "Elegy" in the opening stanzas, it is in substance entirely original. And what a charming picture does it unfold to us of the interior of a Scottish peasant's cottage, cheerful, decent, self-respecting poverty, supported and solaced by the hopes and the exercise of religion, parental tenderness, filial piety, and the sweet solicitudes of virtuous love. Utterly homely and realistic, it has yet in it a quiet beauty and completeness which satisfy the imagination no less than they touch the heart. It is impossible to avoid being struck with the contrast between this humble but happy home, and the glimpse which we get at the commencement of the "Vision" into Burns's own dwelling when he describes himself as sitting "half mad, half fed, half sarkit," and surrounded by every conceivable circumstance of discomfort. Indeed, though there are few finer poems than the "Vision," there are also few which, in my mind at least, produce a more melancholy impression. It is so purely autobiographical in form that we cannot dissociate it from the personal history of the author, and it discloses more clearly than most of his works the conflict of irreconcilable aims—the hankering on the one hand after independence and social position, and the desire on the other to devote himself in full singleness of heart to poetry, to which, more than to any other cause, the shipwreck of his life must be ascribed. We have a presentiment after reading it that Coila's visit will afford him no permanent solace, and that on his head her holly crown, though it cannot fade or wither, will be all too surely a crown of thorns. But it would be endless were I to detain you with observations on the particular poems. It may be said generally of this volume that in it Burns has faithfully acquitted himself of the task which he undertakes in the preface. He sings "the sentiments and manners he felt and saw in himself and his rustic compeers around him in his and their native language." In his pages the little world which was allotted to him as his earthly sphere of action seems to live again before us. Its toils, its cares, its loves, its sports, its joys and sorrows, are present to us almost as they were to him. It lives before us, not in any ideal scene or imaginary Arcadia, but in an extremely well-defined locality in that district of Kyle circumscribed between the waters of Irvine and Doon, of which

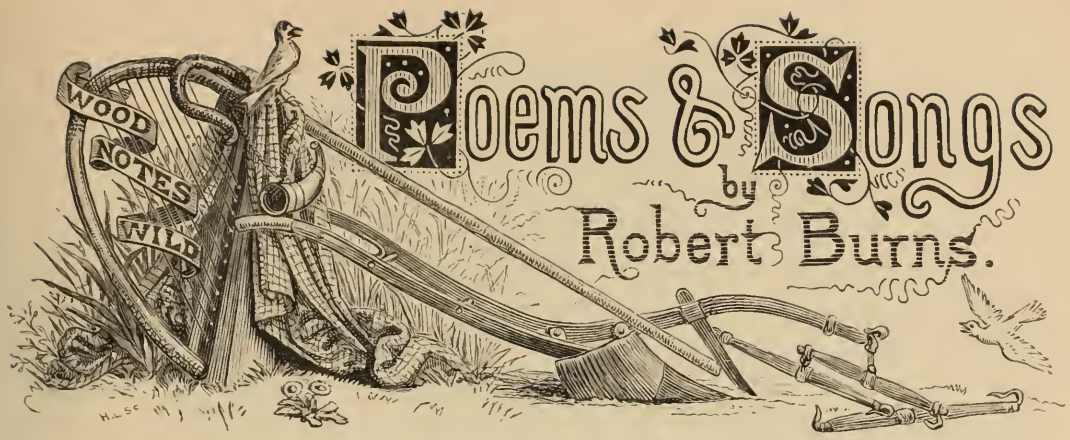
Burns regarded himself as the laureate, and whose topographical features—its hills and dales, its woods and streams, its towns and hamlets—are constantly present as the ground and framework of the picture. Then, how graphically and forcibly does he present it, with loving tenderness, with sly drollery, with bitter sarcasm or fierce invective, according as the occasion requires, but always in an entirely sincere, genuine, and unaffected manner. Drawing his materials at first hand from nature, our Ayrshire bard, though he wrote at the end of the artificial eighteenth century, mirrors her in his artless verse with a freshness equal to Homer's, who sang his immortal song in the infancy of the world. It may be said, with little exaggeration, of this Scottish skylark:

"Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Dew-awakened flowers—
All that ever was
Joyous and clear and fresh, thy music doth surpass."

We need not be surprised that such a book appearing when it did excited, as soon as it became generally known, the utmost astonishment and admiration. In the public mind of his own time the circumstances and situation of the author exalted him into a kind of prodigy, and a good deal of senseless wonder entered into the enthusiasm with which he was regarded. Our estimate of Burns must indeed be largely affected by considering the extraordinary difficulties and obstructions under which not this volume only, but his lifework generally, was produced and performed. The man was greater than his writings in a degree not easy to measure. Important and imperishable as they are, they constitute but a poor and imperfect fragment of what under happier conditions it lay within him to accomplish. Still the publication of this volume was, as I have already said, one of the greatest events in the history of literature. We must bear in mind the circumstances and character of the time at which it made its appearance. The peculiar culture which reached its highest development in the eighteenth century—admirably brilliant and polished, but cold, hard, and superficial—had withered up poetry at the roots, like everything else that was deep in human life. It seemed really true that the "list of mighty poets" was made up, and the scroll folded by the muses. But here once more, in the person of this obscure Ayrshire ploughman, Nature asserted her undying vigour, and proved that in spite of human artificiality and hollowness she still retained the power which had sent forth for the delight and instruction of mankind the Homer, the Dante, and the Shakspeare of an earlier time. I shall not deny that from various causes not hard to discover Burns is somewhat of an isolated phenomenon in literary history, and he cannot, perhaps, be credited with having materially influenced the poetic revival which here as elsewhere followed the French Revolution. But sure I am that in the aim which more or less consciously his work proposed to itself—the return to truth, nature, and genuine human feeling—he anticipated and surpassed the most gifted of his successors. What chiefly concerns us now, however, is less the influence exerted by Burns on the literature of the last hundred years than the marvellous extent to which during the same period his name and memory have wound themselves round the heart of Scotland. At home and abroad, to whatever clime her adventurous sons have directed their wanderings, the national sentiment by which in every clime they rarely cease to be animated is in no small measure identified with that memory and that name. Others of our countrymen have attained high and conspicuous places in the Temple of Fame, but this is the shrine round which we most love to congregate, to render not the cold tribute of critical applause, but the warm homage of regretful affection. One reason of the preference—why should we be ashamed to confess it?—lies in the fact that Burns is so peculiarly our own. We hardly share him even with England or the general body of the English-speaking world. Our friends across the Tweed and across the Atlantic read and admire him no doubt, occasionally with a depth of insight and a warmth of sympathetic appreciation which may well excite our envy, but to them he must always come dressed in something of a foreign garb. For though Mr. Cuthbertson in his recent "Glossary of Burns" has shown that the poet's vocabulary contains very few words which were not formerly in use over the whole or in some part of England, much of his language is strange and unfamiliar to the modern inhabitants of that country, and can never have for them the same deep and homely significance with which it appeals to us. If fortune had bestowed on Burns what Carlyle regrets that he should have missed, the advantages of a liberal education, he might, he probably would, have attained to a far higher place in literature—a place second only, if even second, to the first. But if such had been his destiny he would have ceased to be peculiarly Scotch, and I do not believe that his name would have evoked anything like the same enthusiasm among his countrymen as that of the Ayrshire ploughman does to-day. It is time that I should bring these remarks to a close. I have spoken of Burns in the character which seemed most suitable to the occasion—as the author of the book which he published here in this town a hundred years ago. I have avoided as much as possible all reference to the personal side of the subject. Burns's errors and indiscretions have been so often lectured upon and wept over, so often explained and extenuated, that I for one think they may henceforth with good reason be buried and forgotten. He paid for them dearly while on earth in self-reproach and hardship. Why should he not now be held to have posthumously lived them down? I at all events will be no party to the irreverence of drawing "his frailties from their dread abode," but I will ask you to think of him as what in truth and in spite of these frailties he is, and will continue to be, the pride and boast of Scotland, and it is as such that I now propose to you "The Memory of Burns."

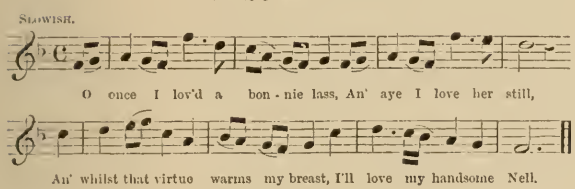
A good many admirers who were invited to be, and might have been present, sent excuses. But Kilmarnock had become so exacting in this particular that such excuses were only to be expected. The good old town has had a "red letter day," thousands having had a pleasant holiday, and "The Memory of the Ayrshire Bard" was once more enthusiastically, nationally, and historically toasted.

August, 1886.



Poems & Songs by Robert Burns.

HANDSOME NELL.*



As bonnie lasses I ha'e seen,
And mony full as braw,
But for a modest gracefu' mien,
The like I never saw.

A bonnie lass, I will confess,
Is pleasant to the e'e,
But without some better qualities
She's no a lass for me.

But Nelly's looks are blithe and sweet,
And, what is best of a',
Her reputation is complete,
And fair without a flaw.

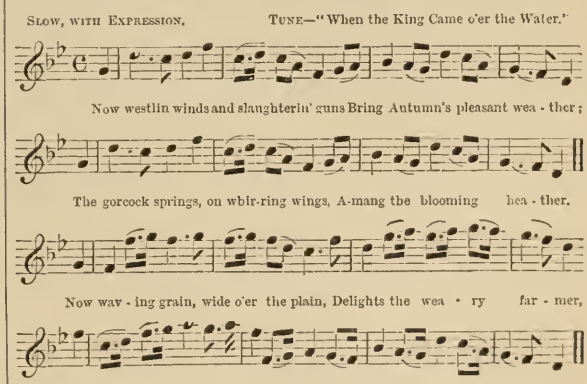
She dresses aye sae clean and neat,
Both decent and genteel;
And then there's something in her gait
Gars ony dress look weel.

A gaudy dress and gentle air
May slightly touch the heart,
But it 's innocence and modesty
That polishes the dart.

"Handsome Nell:" Burns' first composition. She was Nelly Kilpatrick, daughter of a blacksmith near Mount Oliphant. She inspired the song in Autumn, 1773, when the Poet was only fifteen.

'Tis this in Nelly pleases me,
'Tis this enchants my soul;
For absolutely in my breast
She reigns without control.

HAIRST—A SONG COMPOSED IN AUGUST.


SLOW, WITH EXPRESSION.
TUNE—"When the King Came o'er the Water."
Now westlin winds and slaughterin' guns Bring Autumn's pleasant wea - ther;
The gorcock springs, on whir-ring wings, A-mang the blooming hea - ther.
Now wav - ing grain, wide o'er the plain, Delights the wea - ry far - mer,
The moon shines bright, as I rove by night, To muse up - on my char - mer.

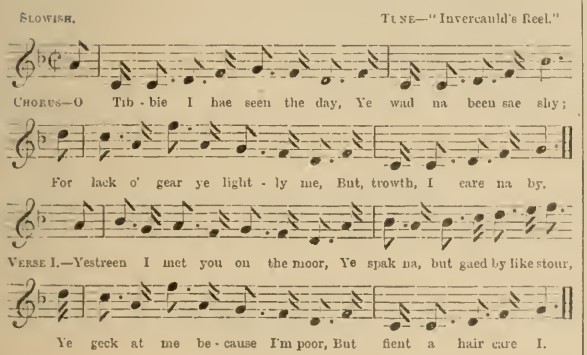
The partridge loves the fruitful fells;
The plover loves the mountains;
The woodcock haunts the lonely dells;
The soaring hern the fountains:
Through lofty groves the cushat roves,
The path of man to shun it;
The hazel bush o'erhangs the thrush,
The spreading thorn the linnet.

Thus every kind their pleasure find,
The savage and the tender;
Some social join, and leagues combine;
Some solitary wander;
Avaunt, away! the cruel sway,
Tyrannic man's dominion;
The sportsman's joy, the murdering cry,
The fluttering, gory pinion!

But Peggy, dear, the evening 's clear,
Thick flies the skimming swallow;
The sky is blue, the fields in view,
All fading-green and yellow:
Come let us stray our gladsome way,
And view the charms of nature;
The rustling corn, the fruited thorn,
And every happy creature.

We'll gently walk, and sweetly talk,
Till the silent moon shine clearly;
I'll grasp thy waist, and, fondly press'd,
Swear how I love thee dearly;
Not vernal showers to budding flowers,
Not autumn to the farmer,
So dear can be as thou to me,
My fair, my lovely charmer!

TIBBIE, I HAE SEEN THE DAY.*


SLOWISH. TUNE—"Invercauld's Reel."
CHORUS—O Tib - bie I hae seen the day, Ye wad na been sae shy;
For lack o' gear ye light - ly me, But, trowth, I care na by.
VERSE I.—Yestreen I met you on the moor, Ye spak na, but gaed by like stour,
Ye geck at me be - cause I'm poor, But fient a hair care I.

I doubt na, lass, but ye may think,
Because ye hae the name o' clink,
That ye can please me at a wink,
Whene'er ye like to try.

O Tibbie, I hae seen the day, &c.

Tibby Stein, a Tarbolton lass. So says Mrs. Begg.

But sorrow tak him that's sae mean,
Although his pouch o' coin were clean,
Wha follows ony saucy quean
That looks sae proud and high.

O Tibbie, I hae seen the day, &c.

Although a lad were e'er sae smart,
If that he want the yellow dirt,
Ye'll cast your head anither airt,
And answer him fu' dry.

O Tibbie, I hae seen the day, &c.

But if he hae the name o' gear,
Ye'll fasten to him like a brier,
Though hardly he, for sense or lear,
Be better than the kye.

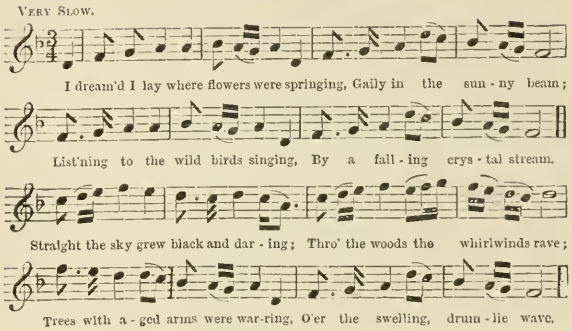
O Tibbie, I hae seen the day, &c.

But, Tibbie, lass, tak my advice:
Your daddie's gear maks you sae nice;
The deil a ane wad spier your price,
Were ye as poor as I.

O Tibbie, I hae seen the day, &c.

There lives a lass in yonder park,
I would na gie her in her sark,
For thee, wi' a' thy thousan' mark;
Ye need na look sae high.
O Tibbie, I hae seen the day, &c.

I DREAM'D I LAY.*


Very Slow.
I dream'd I lay where flowers were springing, Gaily in the sun - ny beam;
List'ning to the wild birds singing, By a fall - ing crys - tal stream.
Straight the sky grew black and dar - ing; Thro' the woods the whirlwinds rave;
Trees with a - ged arms were war-ring, O'er the swelling, drum - lie wave.

Such was my life's deceitful morning,
Such the pleasures I enjoy'd;
But lang ere noon, loud tempests storming
A' my flow'ry bliss destroy'd.
Though fickle fortune has deceived me,
(She promised fair, and perform'd but ill;)
Of mony a joy and hope bereaved me,
I bear a heart shall support me still.

TRAGIC FRAGMENT.

"In my early years nothing less would serve me than courting the Tragic Muse. I was, I think, about eighteen or nineteen when I sketched the outlines of a tragedy forsooth; but the bursting of a cloud of family misfortunes, which had for some time threatened us, prevented my farther progress. In those days I never wrote down any thing; so, except a speech or two, the whole has escaped my memory. The following, which I most distinctly remember, was an exclamation from a great character—great in occasional instances of generosity, and daring at times in villanies. He is supposed to meet with a child of misery, and exclaims to himself:—(B.)

"All devil as I am, a damnèd wretch,
A harden'd, stubborn, unrepenting villain,
Still my heart melts at human wretchedness;
And with sincere though unavailing sighs
I view the helpless children of distress.†
With tears indignant I behold th' oppressor
Rejoicing in the honest man's destruction,
Whose unsubmitting heart was all his crime.
Even you, ye helpless crew, I pity you;
Ye, whom the seeming good think sin to pity:
Ye poor, despised, abandon'd vagabonds,
Whom vice, as usual, has turn'd o'er to ruin.
Oh, but for kind, though ill-requited friends,
I had been driven forth like you forlorn,
The most detested, worthless wretch among you!

* Composed when Burns was only seventeen. Probably suggested by Mrs. Cockburn's "Flowers of the Forest."

† He alludes to his family misfortunes at Mount Oliphant.—See Life.

THE TARBOLTON LASSES.

If ye gae up to yon hill-tap,
Ye'll there see bonnie Peggy;
She kens her father is a laird,
And she forsooth's a leddy.

There Sophy tight, a lassie bright,
Besides a handsome fortune:
Wha canna win her in a night,
Has little art in courtin.

Gae down by Faile, and taste the ale,
And tak a look o' Mysie;
She's dour and din, a deil within,
But aiblins she may please ye.

If she be shy, her sister try,
Ye'll may be fancy Jenny;
If ye'll dispense wi' want o' sense—
She kens hersel she's bonnie.

As ye gae up by yon hillside,
Spier in for bonnie Bessie;
She'll gie ye a beck, and bid ye light
And handsomely address ye.

There's few sae bonnie, nane sae guid,
In a' King George' dominion;
If ye should doubt the truth o' this—
It's Bessy's ain opinion!

AH, WOE IS ME, MY MOTHER DEAR.

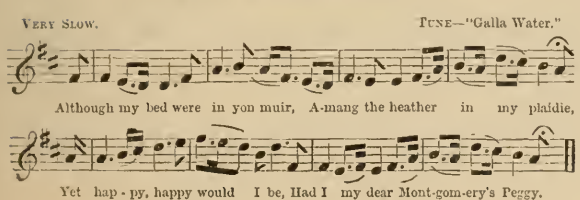
Paraphrase of Jeremiah, 15th Chap., 10th verse.

Ah, woe is me, my Mother dear!
A man of strife ye've born me:
For sair contention I maun bear;
They hate, revile, and scorn me.

I ne'er could lend on bill or band,
That five per cent. might blest me;
And borrowing, on the tither hand,
The de'il a ane wad trust me.

Yet I, a coin-denièd wight,
By Fortune quite discarded;
Ye see how I am, day and night,
By lad and lass blackguarded!

MONTGOMERY'S PEGGY.*


VERY SLOW.
TUNE—"Galla Water."
Although my bed were in yon muir, A-mang the heather in my plaidie,
Yet hap-py, happy would I be, Had I my dear Mont-gom-ery's Peggy.

When o'er the hill beat surly storms,
And winter nights were dark and rainy;
I 'd seek some dell, and in my arms
I 'd shelter dear Montgomery's Peggy.

Were I a baron proud and high,
And horse and servants waiting ready,
Then a' 'twad gie o' joy to me,
The sharin't with Montgomery's Peggy,

* She became Mrs. Derbishire, and lived in London. Housekeeper at Coilsfield House; engaged ere Burns knew her.

THE PLOUGHMAN'S LIFE.

As I was a-wandering ae morning in spring,
I heard a young ploughman sae sweetly to sing;
And as he was singin' thir words he did say,
"There 's nae life like the ploughman's in the month o' sweet May.

"The laverock in the morning she'll rise frae her nest,
And mount to the air wi' the dew on her breast;
And wi' the merry ploughman she'll whistle and sing,
And at night she'll return to her nest back again."

THE RONALDS OF THE BENNALS.*

In Tarbolton, ye ken, there are proper young men,
  And proper young lasses and a', man;
But ken ye the Ronalds that live in the Bennals,
  They carry the gree frae them a', man.

Their father's a laird, and weel he can spare't,
  Braid money to tocher them a', man;
To proper young men, he'll clink in the hand
  Gowd guineas a hunder or twa, man.

There's ane they ca' Jean, I'll warrant ye've seen
  As bonnie a lass or as braw, man;
But for sense and guid taste she'll vie wi' the best,
  And a conduct that beautifies a', man.

The charms o' the min', the langer they shine,
  The mair admiration they draw, man;
While peaches and cherries, and roses and lilies,
  They fade and they wither awa, man.

If ye be for Miss Jean, tak this frae a frien',
  A hint o' a rival or twa, man;
The Laird o' Blackbyre wad gang through the fire,
  If that wad entice her awa, man.

The Laird o' Brachead has been on his speed,
  For mair than a towmond or twa, man;
The Laird o' the Ford will straught on a board,
  If he canna get her at a', man.

Then Anna comes in, the pride o' her kin,
  The boast of our bachelors a', man:
Sae sonsy and sweet, sae fully complete,
  She steals our affections awa, man.

If I should detail the pick and the wale
  O' lasses that live here awa, man.
The fau't wad be mine if they didna shine
  The sweetest and best o' them a', man.

I lo'e her mysel, but darena weel tell,
  My poverty keeps me in awe, man;
For making o' rhymes, and working at times,
  Does little or naething at a', man.

* The Bennals, a farm in the west end of Tarbolton. Gilbert Burns courted one of these ladies in vain.

Yet I wadna choose to let her refuse,
  Nor hae 't in her power to say na, man:
For though I be poor, unnoticed, obscure,
  My stomach 's as proud as them a', man.

Though I canna ride in weel-booted pride,
  And flee o'er the hills like a craw, man,
I can haud up my head wi' the best o' the breed,
  Though fluttering ever so braw, man.

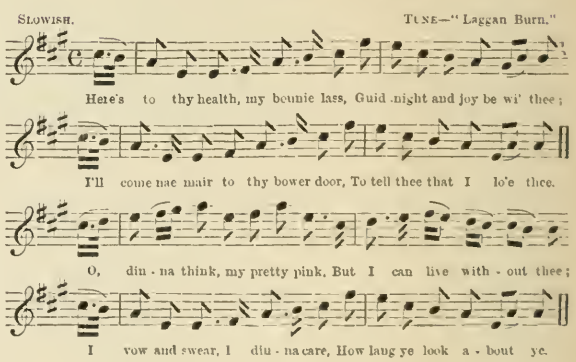
My coat and my vest, they are Scotch o' the best,
  O' pairs o' guid breeks I hae twa, man;
And stockings and pumps to put on my stumps,
  And ne'er a wrang steek in them a', man.

My sarks they are few, but five o' them new,
  Twal' hundred, as white as the snaw, man,
A ten-shillings hat, a Holland cravat;
  There are no mony poets sae braw, man.

I never had freens weel stockit in means,
  To leave me a hundred or twa, man;
Nae weel-tocher'd aunts, to wait on their drants,†
  And wish them in hell for it a', man.

I never was cannie for hoarding o' money,
  Or claughtin 't together at a', man;
I've little to spend, and naething to lend,
  But deevil a shilling I awe, man.

HERE'S TO THY HEALTH.


Slowish.
Tune—"Laggan Burn."
Here's to thy health, my bonnie lass, Guid night and joy be wi' thee;
I'll come nae mair to thy bower door, To tell thee that I lo'e thee.
O, din - na think, my pretty pink, But I can live with - out thee;
I vow and swear, I din - na care, How lang ye look a - bout ye.

Thou 'rt aye sae free informing me
  Thou hast nae mind to marry;
I'll be as free informing thee
  Nae time hae I to tarry.
I ken thy friens try ilka means
  Frae wedlock to delay thee,
Depending on some higher chance;
  But fortune may betray thee.

† "Drants," long prayers.

I ken they scorn my low estate,
But that does never grieve me;
But I'm as free as any he,
Sma' siller will relieve me.
I 'll count my health my greatest wealth,
Sae lang as I 'll enjoy it:
I 'll fear nae scant, I 'll bode nae want,
As lang 's I get employment.

But far-off fowls hae feathers fair,
And aye until ye try them:
Though they seem fair, still have a care,
They may prove waur than I am.
But at twal at night, when the moon shines bright,
My dear, I 'll come and see thee;
For the man that lo'es his mistress weel,
Nae travel makes him weary.

THE LASS OF CESSNOCK BANKS.*

On Cessnock banks there lives a lass,
Could I describe her shape and mien;
The graces of her weel-fared face,
And the glancin' of her sparkling e'en.

She 's fresher than the morning dawn,
When rising Phœbus first is seen,
When dew-drops twinkle o'er the lawn;
And she 's twa glancin', sparklin' e'en.

She 's stately like yon youthful ash,
That grows the cowslip braes between,
And shoots its head above each bush;
And she 's twa glancin', sparklin' e'en.

She 's spotless as the flowering thorn
With flowers so white and leaves so green,
When purest in the dewy morn;
And she 's twa glancin', sparklin' e'en.

Her looks are like the sportive lamb,
When flowery May adorns the scene,
That wantons round its bleating dam;
And she 's twa glancin', sparklin' e'en.

Her hair is like the curling mist
That shades the mountain-side at e'en,
When flower-reviving rains are past;
And she 's twa glancin', sparklin' e'en.

Her forehead 's like the show'ry bow,
When shining sunbeams intervene,
And gild the distant mountain's brow;
And she 's twa glancin', sparklin' e'en.

Her voice is like the evening thrush
That sings on Cessnock banks unseen,
While his mate sits nestling in the bush;
And she 's twa glancin', sparklin' e'en.

Her lips are like the cherries ripe,
That sunny walls from Boreas screen,
They tempt the taste and charm the sight;
And she 's twa glancin', sparklin' e'en.

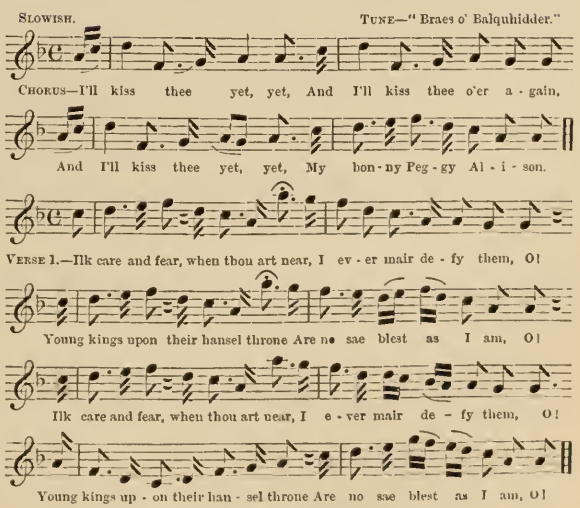
Her teeth are like a flock of sheep,
With fleeces newly washen clean,
That slowly mount the rising steep;
And she 's twa glancin', sparklin' e'en.

Her breath is like the fragrant breeze
That gently stirs the blossom'd bean,
When Phœbus sinks behind the seas;
And she 's twa glancin', sparklin' e'en.

But it's not her air, her form, her face,
Though matching beauty's fabled queen;
But the mind that shines in every grace,
And chiefly in her sparklin' e'en!

* Ellison Begbie, daughter of a small farmer, who served with a family on Cessnock water, near Lochlea. She rejected Burns' suit.

BONNIE PEGGY ALISON.†

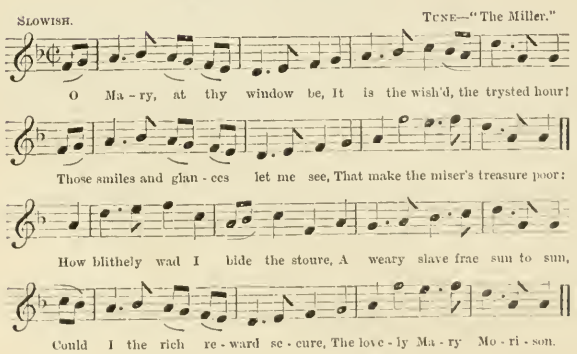

Slowish.
Tune—"Braes o' Balquhidder."
Chorus—I'll kiss thee yet, yet, And I'll kiss thee o'er a - gain,
And I'll kiss thee yet, yet, My bon - ny Peg - gy Al - i - son.
Verse 1.—Ilk care and fear, when thou art near, I ev - er mair de - fy them, O!
Young kings upon their hansel throne Are no sae blest as I am, O!
Ilk care and fear, when thou art near, I e - ver mair de - fy them, O!
Young kings up - on their han - sel throne Are no sae blest as I am, O!

† Supposed to be the same with Ellison Begbie.

When in my arms, wi' a' thy charms,
I clasp my countless treasure, O!
I seek nae mair o' Heaven to share,
Than sic a moment's pleasure, O!

And by thy e'en, sae bounie blue,
I swear I'm thine for ever, O!
And on thy lips I seal my vow,
And break it shall I never, O!

MARY MORISON.*


Slowish.
Tune—"The Miller."
O Ma - ry, at thy window be, It is the wish'd, the trysted hour!
Those smiles and glan - ces let me see, That make the miser's treasure poor:
How blithely wad I bide the stoure, A weary slave frae sun to sun,
Could I the rich re - ward se - cure, The love - ly Ma - ry Mo - ri - son.

Yestreen, when, to the trembling string,
The dance gaed through the lighted ha',
To thee my fancy took its wing,
I sat, but neither heard nor saw:

Though this was fair, and that was braw,
And yon the toast of a' the town,
I sigh'd, and said amang them a',
"Ye are na Mary Morison."

Oh, Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,
Wha for thy sake wad gladly die?
Or canst thou break that heart of his,
Whase only fault is loving thee?
If love for love thou wilt na gie,
At least be pity to me shown;
A thought ungentle canna be
The thought o' Mary Morison.

WINTER, A DIRGE.†

The wintry west extends his blast,
And hail and rain does blaw;
Or, the stormy north sends driving forth
The blinding sleet and snaw:
While, tumbling brown, the burn comes down,
And roars frae bank to brae;
And bird and beast in covert rest,
And pass the heartless day.

"The sweeping blast, the sky o'ercast,"‡
The joyless winter-day,
Let others fear, to me more dear
Than all the pride of May:

* Heroine uncertain. Song repeated in the "Thomson Correspondence." In our opinion the most exquisite of all Burns' love songs. See also "Hazlitt's English Poets."

† Written probably at Irvine in 1781, when in a very dark mood.

‡ "O'ercast:" Dr. Young.—(B.)

The tempest's howl, it soothes my soul,
My griefs it seems to join;
The leafless trees my fancy please,
Their fate resembles mine!

Thou Power Supreme, whose mighty scheme
These woes of mine fulfil,
Here, firm, I rest, they must be best,
Because they are Thy will!
Then all I want (oh, do Thou grant
This one request of mine!)
Since to enjoy Thou dost deny,
Assist me to resign.

PRAYER UNDER VIOLENT ANGUISH.*

O Thou Great Being! what Thou art,
Surpasses me to know:
Yet sure I am that known to Thee
Are all Thy works below.

Thy creature here before Thee stands,
All wretched and distress'd,
Yet sure those ills that wring my soul
Obey Thy high behest.

Sure Thou, Almighty, canst not act
From cruelty or wrath!
Oh free my weary eyes from tears,
Or close them fast in death!

But if I must afflicted be,
To suit some wise design;
Then man my soul with firm resolves,
To bear and not repine!

* Written at Irvine about the same time with "Winter, a Dirge."

PARAPHRASE OF THE FIRST PSALM.

The man, in life wherever placed,
Hath happiness in store,
Who walks not in the wicked's way,
Nor learns their guilty lore!

Nor from the seat of scornful pride
Casts forth his eyes abroad,
But with humility and awe
Still walks before his God.

That man shall flourish like the trees
Which by the streamlets grow;
The fruitful top is spread on high,
And firm the root below.

But he whose blossom buds in guilt
Shall to the ground be cast,
And, like the rootless stubble, tost
Before the sweeping blast.

For why? that God the good adore
Hath given them peace and rest,
But hath decreed that wicked men
Shall ne'er be truly blest.

FIRST SIX VERSES OF THE NINTIETH PSALM.

O Thou, the first, the greatest Friend
Of all the human race!
Whose strong right hand has ever been
Their stay and dwelling-place!

Before the mountains heaved their heads
Beneath Thy forming hand,
Before this ponderous globe itself
Arose at Thy command;

That Power which raised and still upholds
This universal frame,
From countless, unbeginning time
Was ever still the same.

Those mighty periods of years
Which seem to us so vast,
Appear no more before Thy sight
Than yesterday that's past.

Thou giv'st the word: Thy creature, man,
Is to existence brought:
Again Thou say'st, "Ye sons of men,
Return ye into nought!"

Thou layest them, with all their cares,
In everlasting sleep;
As with a flood Thou tak'st them off
With overwhelming sweep.

They flourish like the morning flower,
In beauty's pride array'd;
But long ere night, cut down, it lies
All wither'd and decay'd.

PRAYER IN THE PROSPECT OF DEATH.*

O Thou unknown, Almighty Cause
Of all my hope and fear!
In whose dread presence, ere an hour,
Perhaps I must appear!

* Dated August, 1784, when the poet was attacked by fainting fits, &c.: see his Common-place Book.

If I have wander'd in those paths
Of life I ought to shun—
As something, loudly, in my breast,
Remonstrates I have done—

Thou know'st that Thou hast formèd me
With passions wild and strong;
And listening to their witching voice
Has often led me wrong.

Where human weakness has come short,
Or frailty stept aside,
Do thou, All-good! for such thou art,
In shades of darkness hide.

Where with intention I have err'd,
No other plea I have,
But, Thou art good; and goodness still
Delighteth to forgive.

ON THE SAME OCCASION.

Why am I loth to leave this earthly scene?
Have I so found it full of pleasing charms?
Some drops of joy with draughts of ill between:
Some gleams of sunshine 'mid renewing storms:
Is it departing pangs my soul alarms?
Or death's unlovely, dreary, dark abode?
For guilt, for guilt, my terrors are in arms;
I tremble to approach an angry God,
And justly smart beneath his sin-avenging rod.

Fain would I say, "Forgive my foul offence!"
Fain promise never more to disobey;
But, should my Author health again dispense,
Again I might desert fair virtue's way;
Again in folly's path might go astray;
Again exalt the brute, and sink the man:
Then how should I for heavenly mercy pray,
Who act so counter heavenly mercy's plan?
Who sin so oft have mourn'd, yet to temptation ran?

O Thou, great Governor of all below!
If I may dare a lifted eye to Thee,
Thy nod can make the tempest cease to blow,
Or still the tumult of the raging sea:
With that controlling power assist even me,
Those headlong furious passions to confine;
For all unfit I feel my powers to be,
To rule their torrent in the allowèd line;
Oh, aid me with Thy help, Omnipotence Divine!

FICKLE FORTUNE.—"A FRAGMENT."

Though fickle Fortune has deceived me,
She promis'd fair and perform'd but ill;
Of mistress, friends, and wealth bereav'd me,
Yet I bear a heart shall support me still.

I'll act with prudence as far as I'm able,
But if success I must never find,
Then come misfortune, I bid thee welcome,
I'll meet thee with an undaunted mind.

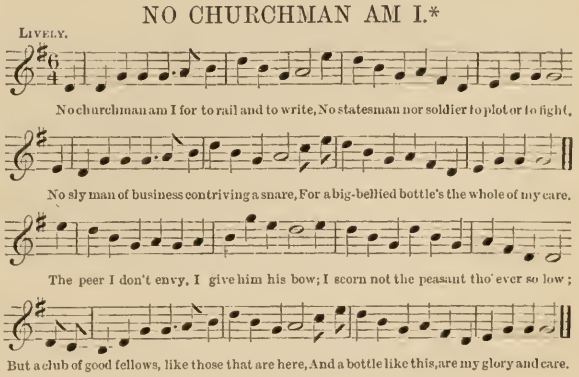
RAGING FORTUNE.

O raging Fortune's withering blast
Has laid my leaf full low!
O raging Fortune's withering blast
Has laid my leaf full low!

My stem was fair, my bud was green,
My blossom sweet did blow;
The dew fell fresh, the sun rose mild,
And made my branches grow;

But luckless Fortune's northern storms
Laid a' my blossoms low,—
But luckless Fortune's northern storms
Laid a' my blossoms low!

NO CHURCHMAN AM I.*


Lively.
No churchman am I for to rail and to write, No statesman nor soldier to plot or to fight,
No sly man of business contriving a snare, For a big-bellied bottle's the whole of my care.
The peer I don't envy, I give him his bow; I scorn not the peasant tho' ever so low;
But a club of good fellows, like those that are here, And a bottle like this, are my glory and care.

Here passes the squire on his brother—his horse;
There centum per centum, the cit with his purse;
But see you The Crown, how it waves in the air!
There a big-bellied bottle still eases my care.

The wife of my bosom, alas! she did die;
For sweet consolation to church I did fly;

* Written after Burns had joined the Free Masons in 1781.

I found that old Solomon provèd it fair,
That a big-bellied bottle 's a cure for all care.

I once was persuaded a venture to make;
A letter inform'd me that all was to wreck;
But the pursy old landlord just waddled up stairs,
With a glorious bottle that ended my cares.

"Life's cares they are comforts"*—a maxim laid down
By the bard, what d' ye call him, that wore the black gown;
And, faith! I agree with the old prig to a hair;
For a big-bellied bottle 's a heaven of care.

ADDED IN A MASON LODGE.

Then fill up a bumper, and make it o'erflow,
And honours masonic prepare for to throw;
May every true brother of the compass and square
Have a big-bellied bottle when harass'd with care!

MY FATHER WAS A FARMER.

Lively.
Tune—"Johnnie's Grey Breeks."
My father was a far - mer Up - on the Carrick border, O!
And care-ful - ly he bred me In de - cen - cy and or - der, O!
He bade me act a man - ly part, Though I had ne'er a farthing, O!
For without an hon - est, manly heart, No man was worth re - gard - ing, O!
He bade me act a man - ly part, Though I had ne'er a farthing, O!
For without an hon - est manly heart, No man was worth regarding, O!

Then out into the world
My course I did determine, O!
Though to be rich was not my wish,
Yet to be great was charming, O!
My talents they were not the worst,
Nor yet my education, O!
Resolved was I, at least to try
To mend my situation, O!

In many a way, and vain essay,
I courted fortune's favour, O!
Some cause unseen still stept between,
To frustrate each endeavour, O!
Sometimes by foes I was o'erpower'd;
Sometimes by friends forsaken, O!
And when my hope was at the top
I still was worst mistaken, O!

Then sore harass'd, and tired at last,
With fortune's vain delusion, O!
I dropt my schemes, like idle dreams,
And came to this conclusion, O!
The past was bad, the future hid;
Its good or ill untrièd, O!
But the present hour was in my power,
And so I would enjoy it, O!

No help, nor hope, nor view had I,
Nor person to befriend me, O!
So I must toil, and sweat, and broil,
And labour to sustain me, O!
To plough and sow, and reap and mow,
My father bred me early, O!
For one, he said, to labour bred,
Was a match for fortune fairly, O!

Thus all obscure, unknown, and poor,
Through life I 'm doom'd to wander, O!
Till down my weary bones I lay
In everlasting slumber, O!
No view nor care, but shun whate'er
Might breed me pain or sorrow, O!
I live to-day as well 's I may,
Regardless of to-morrow, O!

But cheerful still, I am as well
As a monarch in a palace, O!
Though fortune's frown still hunts me down,
With all her wanton malice, O!
I make indeed my daily bread,
But ne'er can make it farther, O!
But as daily bread is all I need,
I do not much regard her, O!

When sometimes by my labour
I earn a little money, O!
Some unforeseen misfortune
Comes generally upon me, O!
Mischance, mistake, or by neglect,
Or my good-natured folly, O!
But come what will, I 've sworn it still,
I 'll ne'er be melancholy, O!

All you who follow wealth and power
With unremitting ardour, O!
The more in this you look for bliss,
You leave your view the farther, O!
Had you the wealth Potosi boasts,
Or nations to adore you, O!
A cheerful, honest-hearted clown
I will prefer before you, O!

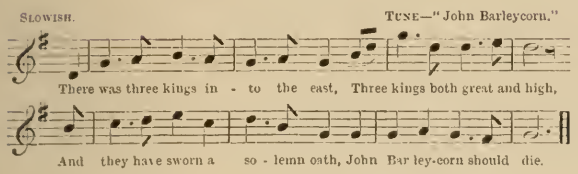
* "Comforts:" Young's "Night Thoughts."—(B.)

IMPROMPTU—"I'LL GO AND BE A SODGER."*

Oh, why the deuce should I repine,
And be an ill foreboder?
I'm twenty-three, and five feet nine—
I'll go, and be a sodger!

I gat some gear wi' meikle care,
I held it weel thegither;
But now it 's gane, and something mair—
I'll go and be a sodger!

JOHN BARLEYCORN.†


SLOWISH.
TUNE—"John Barleycorn."
There was three kings in - to the east, Three kings both great and high,
And they have sworn a so - lemn oath, John Bar ley-corn should die.

They took a plough and plough'd him down,
Put clods upon his head;
And they hae sworn a solemn oath
John Barleycorn was dead.

But the cheerful spring came kindly on,
And showers began to fall;
John Barleycorn got up again,
And sore surprised them all.

The sultry suns of summer came,
And he grew thick and strong,
His head weel arm'd wi' pointed spears,
That no one should him wrong.

The sober autumn enter'd mild,
When he grew wan and pale;
His bending joints and drooping head
Show'd he began to fail.

His colour sicken'd more and more,
He faded into age;
And then his enemies began
To show their deadly rage.

They've taen a weapon, long and sharp,
And cut him by the knee;
Then tied him fast upon a cart,
Like a rogue for forgerie.

They laid him down upon his back,
And cudgell'd him full sore;
They hung him up before the storm,
And turn'd him o'er and o'er.

They filled up a darksome pit
With water to the brim;
They heaved in John Barleycorn,
There let him sink or swim.

They laid him out upon the floor,
To work him further woe;
And still, as signs of life appear'd,
They toss'd him to and fro.

They wasted, o'er a scorching flame,
The marrow of his bones;
But a miller used him worst of all,
For he crush'd him between two stones.

And they hae ta'en his very heart's blood,
And drank it round and round;
And still the more and more they drank,
Their joy did more abound.

John Barleycorn was a hero bold,
Of noble enterprise;
For if you do but taste his blood,
'Twill make your courage rise.

'Twill make a man forget his woe;
'Twill heighten all his joy;
'Twill make the widow's heart to sing,
Though the tear were in her eye.

Then let us toast John Barleycorn,
Each man a glass in hand;
And may his great posterity
Ne'er fail in old Scotland!

POOR MAILIE,‡ AND ELEGY ON HER.

THE AUTHOR'S ONLY PET YOWE:
AN UNCO MOURNFU' TALE.

As Mailie and her lambs thegither
Were ae day nibbling on the tether,
Upon her cloot she coost a hitch,
And owre she warsled in the ditch:
There, groaning, dying, she did lie,
When Hughoe § he cam doytin' by.
Wi' glowrin' e'en, and lifted han's,
Poor Hughoe like a statue stan's;
He saw her days were near-hand ended,
But, waes my heart! he couldna mend it!
He gaped wide, but naething spak;
At length poor Mailie silence brak:
"O thou, whase lamentable face
Appears to mourn my woefu' case,

* Written at Lochlea, after being at Irvine in deep depression.

† "John Barleycorn:" this is partly composed on the plan of an old song known by the same name.—*B.* It will be found in Jamieson's Ballads, copied from black-letter in the Pepy's Library, Cambridge.

‡ Mailie, a pet yowe that got entangled in its tether.

§ "Hughoe:" a neighbour herd-callan, an odd, gapin, glowrin callant, about three-fourths wise.—(B). This took place at Lochlea.

My dying words attentive hear,
An' bear them to my master dear.
"Tell him, if e'er again he keep
As muckle gear as buy a sheep,
Oh, bid him never tie them mair
Wi' wicked strings o' hemp or hair!
But ca' them out to park or hill,
And let them wander at their will;
So may his flock increase, and grow
To scores o' lambs, an' packs o' woo'!
"Tell him, he was a master kin',
And aye was guid to me and mine;
And now my dying charge I gie him—
My helpless lambs I trust them wi' him.
"Oh, bid him save their harmless lives,
Frae dogs, an' tods, an' butcher's knives!
But gie them guid cow-milk their fill,
Till they be fit to fend themsel';
And tent them duly, e'en an' morn,
Wi' teats o' hay, an' ripps o' corn.
"And may they never learn the gaets
Of other vile, wanrestfu' pets!
To slink through slaps, and reave an' steal,
At stacks o' pease, or stocks o' kail.
So may they, like their great forbears,
For mony a year come through the sheers:
So wives will gie them bits o' bread,
An' bairns greet for them when they're dead.
"My poor toop-lamb, my son an' heir,
Oh, bid him breed him up wi' care!
And if he live to be a beast,
To pit some havins in his breast!
And warn him, what I winna name,
To stay content wi' yowes at hame;
And no to rin an' wear his cloots,
Like ither menseless, graceless brutes.
"And neist my yowie, silly thing,
Gude keep thee frae a tether string!
O! may thou ne'er forgather up
Wi' ony blastit moorland toop;
But aye keep mind to moop an' mell
Wi' sheep o' credit like thysel'!
"And now, my bairns, wi' my last breath,
I lea'e my blessin' wi' you baith:
And when you think upo' your mither,
Mind to be kin' to ane anither.
"Now, honest Hughoe, dinna fail
To tell my maister a' my tale;
And bid him burn this cursed tether,
And, for thy pains, thou'se get my blether."
This said, poor Mailie turn'd her head,
And closed her e'en amang the dead.

POOR MAILIE'S ELEGY.

Lament in rhyme, lament in prose,
Wi' saut tears trickling down your nose;
Our Bardie's fate is at a close,
Past a' remead;
The last sad cap-stane o' his woes—
Poor Mailie's dead!

It's no the loss o' warl's gear,
That could sae bitter draw the tear,
Or make our Bardie, dowie, wear
The mourning weed:
He's lost a friend and neebour dear,
In Mailie dead.

Through a' the toun she trotted by him;
A lang half-mile she could descry him;
Wi' kindly bleat, when she did spy him,
She ran wi' speed:
A friend mair faithfu' ne'er cam nigh him,
Than Mailie dead.

I wat she was a sheep o' sense
And could behave hersel' wi' mense:
I'll say't, she never brak a fence,
Through thievish greed.
Our Bardie, lanely, keeps the spence
Sin' Mailie's dead.

Or, if he wanders up the howe,
Her living image in her yowe
Comes bleating to him, owre the knowe,
For bits o' bread;
An' down the briny pearls rowe
For Mailie dead.

She was nae get o' moorland tips,
Wi' tawted ket, an' hairy hips:
For her forbears were brought in ships
Frae yont the Tweed:
A bonnier fleesh ne'er cross'd the clips
Than Mailie dead.

Wae worth the man wha first did shape
That vile, wanchancie thing—a rape!
It maks guid fellows girn an' gape,
Wi' chokin' dread;
And Robin's bonnet wave wi' crape,
For Mailie dead.

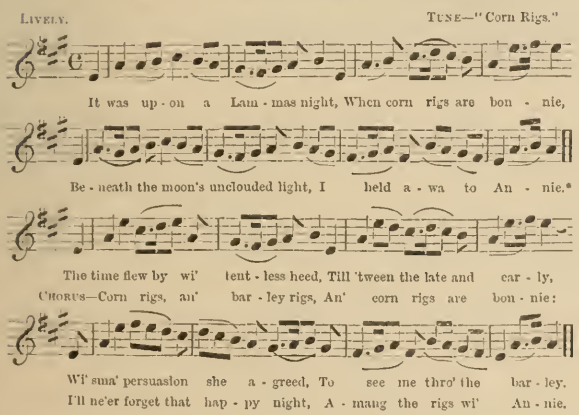
O a' ye bards on bonny Doon!
An' wha on Ayr your chanters tune!
Come join the melancholious croon
O' Robin's reed!
His heart will never get aboon
His Mailie dead.

The following verse was deleted by the Poet:—

She was nae get o' runted rams,
Wi' woo like goats, and legs like trams:
She was the flower o' Fairlie* lambs—
A famous breed;
Now Robin, greetin', chews the hams,
O' Mailie dead.

* Fairlie, the first place where Burns' father got employment.

IT WAS UPON A LAMMAS NIGHT.


LIVELY.
TUNE—"Corn Rigs."
It was up - on a Lam - mas night, When corn rigs are bon - nie,
Be - neath the moon's unclouded light, I held a - wa to An - nie.*
The time flew by wi' tent - less heed, Till 'tween the late and ear - ly,
CHORUS—Corn rigs, an' bar - ley rigs, An' corn rigs are bon - nie:
Wi' sma' persuasion she a - greed, To see me thro' the bar - ley.
I'll ne'er forget that hap - py night, A - mang the rigs wi' An - nie.

The sky was blue, the wind was still,
The moon was shining clearly;
I set her down, wi' right good will,
Amang the rigs o' barley;
I ken't her heart was a' my ain;
I loved her most sincerely;
I kiss'd her owre and owre again,
Amang the rigs o' barley.

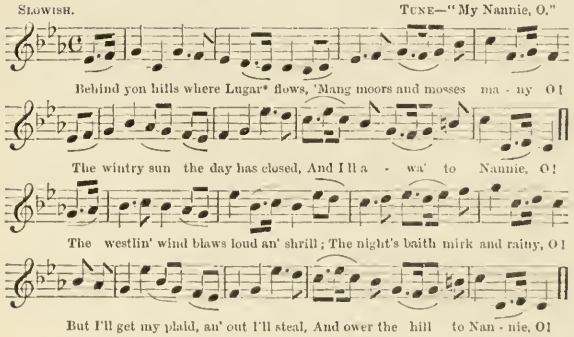
I lock'd her in my fond embrace;
Her heart was beating rarely:
My blessings on that happy place,
Amang the rigs o' barley!
But by the moon and stars so bright,
That shone that hour so clearly,
She aye shall bless that happy night,
Amang the rigs o' barley!

I hae been blithe wi' comrades dear;
I hae been merry drinkin';
I hae been joyfu' gath'rin' gear;
I hae been happy thinkin':
But a' the pleasures e'er I saw,
Though three times doubled fairly,
That happy night was worth them a',
Amang the rigs o' barley.

* "Annie:" Anne Mary, youngest daughter of John Rankine, of Adamhill, near Lochlea; she became the keeper of a hostelry at Cumnock. Mrs. Mirry by name.

MY NANNIE O!

SLOWISH. TUNE—"My Nannie, O."


Behind yon hills where Lugar* flows, 'Mang moors and mosses ma - ny O!
The wintry sun the day has closed, And I'll a - wa' to Nannie, O!
The westlin' wind blaws loud an' shrill; The night's baith mirk and rainy, O!
But I'll get my plaid, an' out I'll steal, And ower the hill to Nan - nie, O!

* "Lugar:" orignally Stinchar Stinchar has local verity in its favour. Lugar rises in Cumnock and reaches the Ayr at Barskimming. Nannie, according to Gilbert Burns, was Nannie Fleming, a farmer's daughter in Tarbolton.

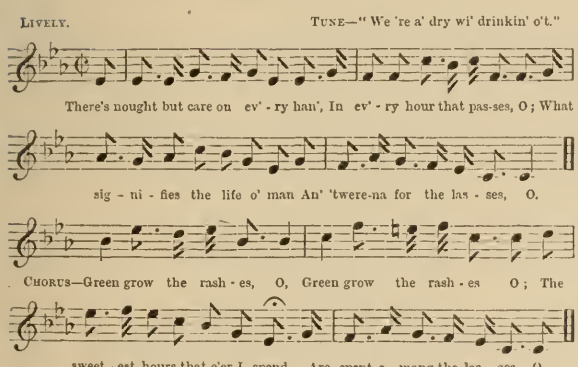
My Nannie's charming, sweet, an' young;
Nae artfu' wiles to win ye, O!
May ill befa' the flattering tongue
That wad beguile my Nannie, O!
Her face is fair, her heart is true,
As spotless as she 's bonnie, O!
The opening gowan, wat wi' dew,
Nae purer is than Nannie, O!

A country lad is my degree,
And few there be that ken me, O!
But what care I how few they be?
I 'm welcome aye to Nannie, O!
My riches a 's my penny-fee,
And I maun guide it cannie, O!
But warl's gear ne'er troubles me,
My thoughts are a'—my Nannie, O!

Our auld guidman delights to view
His sheep an' kye thrive bonnie, O!
But I 'm as blithe that hauds his pleugh,
And has nae care but Nannie, O!

Come weel, come woe, I care na by,
I 'll tak what Heaven will sen' me, O!
Nae ither care in life have I,
But live, an' love my Nannie, O!

GREEN GROW THE RASHES.*


Lively.
Tune—"We 're a' dry wi' drinkin' o't."
There's nought but care on ev' - ry han', In ev' - ry hour that pas-ses, O; What
sig - ni - fies the life o' man An' 'twere-na for the las - ses, O.
Chorus—Green grow the rash - es, O, Green grow the rash - es O; The
sweet - est hours that e'er I spend, Are spent a - mang the las - ses, O.

The warly race may riches chase,
And riches still may fly them, O!

* This is an improvement on an old song.—(B.)

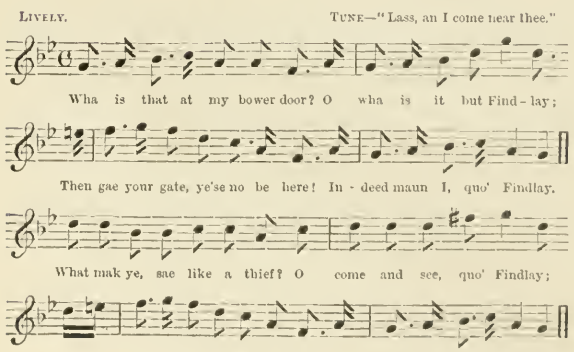
And though at last they catch them fast,
Their hearts can ne'er enjoy them, O!
Green grow, &c.

But gie me a canny hour at e'en,
My arms about my dearie, O!
And warly cares, an' warly men,
May a' gae tapsalteerie, O!
Green grow, &c.

For you sae douse, ye sneer at this;
Ye 're nought but senseless asses, O!
The wisest man the warl' e'er saw,
He dearly loved the lasses, O!
Green grow, &c.

Auld Nature swears, the lovely dears
Her noblest work she classes, O!
Her 'prentice han' she tried on man,
And then she made the lasses, O!
Green grow, &c.

INDEED WILL I, QUO' FINDLAY.*


Lively.
Tune—"Lass, an I come near thee."
Wha is that at my bower door? O wha is it but Find-lay;
Then gae your gate, ye'se no be here! In-deed maun I, quo' Findlay.
What mak ye, sae like a thief? O come and see, quo' Findlay;
Be-fore the morn ye'll work mischief; In-deed will I, quo' Findlay.

* Perhaps James Findlay, an officer of excise in Tarbolton, who trained Burns in that profession.

Gif I rise and let ye in
(Let me in, quo' Findlay)
Ye 'll keep me waukin' wi' your din';
(Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.)
In my bower if you should stay
(Let me stay, quo' Findlay)
I fear ye 'll bide till break o' day;
(Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.)

Here this night if ye remain
(I 'll remain, quo' Findlay)
I dread ye 'll learn the gate again;
(Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.)
What may pass within this bower
(Let it pass, quo' Findlay)
Ye maun conceal till your last hour;
(Indeed will I, quo' Findlay!)

REMORSE,* A FRAGMENT.

Of all the numerous ills that hurt our peace,
That press the soul, or wring the mind with anguish,
Beyond comparison the worst are those
That to our folly or our guilt we owe.
In every other circumstance, the mind
Has this to say—"It was no deed of mine!"
But when to all the evil of misfortune
This sting is added—"Blame thy foolish self!"
Or worser far, the pangs of keen remorse,
The torturing, gnawing consciousness of guilt—
Of guilt, perhaps, where we 've involvèd others;
The young, the innocent, who fondly loved us,
Nay, more, that very love their cause of ruin!
O burning hell! in all thy store of torments
There's not a keener lash!
Lives there a man so firm, who, while his heart
Feels all the bitter horrors of his crime,
Can reason down its agonizing throbs;
And, after proper purpose of amendment,
Can firmly force his jarring thoughts to peace?
O happy, happy, enviable man!
O glorious magnanimity of soul!

EPITAPH ON JAMES GRIEVE, LAIRD OF BOGHEAD,† TARBOLTON.

Here lies Boghead amang the dead,
In hopes to get salvation;
But if such as he in Heaven may be,
Then welcome—hail! damnation.

EPITAPH ON WILLIAM HOOD.

Here souter Hood‡ in death does sleep:
To hell if he 's gane thither,
Satan, gie him thy gear to keep,
He 'll haud it weel thegither.

EPITAPH ON A FRIEND.§

An honest man here lies at rest,
As e'er God with his image blest;
The friend of man, the friend of truth,
The friend of age, and guide of youth:
Few hearts like his, with virtue warm'd,
Few heads with knowledge so inform'd.
If there's another world, he lives in bliss;
If there is none, he made the best of this.

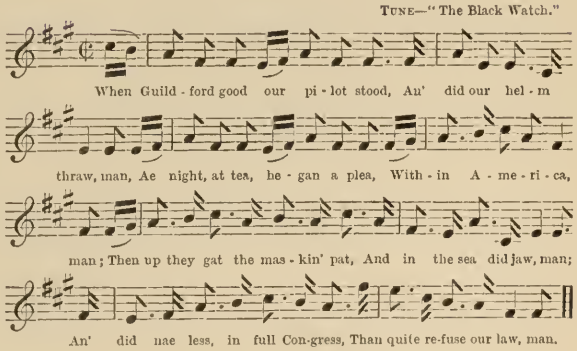
EPITAPH FOR THE AUTHOR'S FATHER.

O ye whose cheek the tear of pity stains,
Draw near with pious reverence and attend!
Here lie the loving husband's dear remains,
The tender father, and the generous friend;

The pitying heart that felt for human woe;
The dauntless heart that fear'd no human pride;
The friend of man, to vice alone a foe;
"For even his failings lean'd to virtue's side."‖

ON THE AMERICAN WAR.¶

Tune—"The Black Watch."


When Guild - ford good our pi - lot stood, An' did our hel - m
thraw, man, Ae night, at tea, he - gan a plea, With - in A - me - ri - ca,
man; Then up they gat the mas - kin' pat, And in the sea did jaw, man;
An' did nae less, in full Con-gress, Than quite re-fuse our law, man.

Then through the lakes Montgomery takes,
I wat he was na slaw, man:
Down Lowrie's burn he took a turn,
And Carleton did ca', man:
But yet, what reck, he at Quebec,
Montgomery-like, did fa', man,
Wi' sword in hand, before his band,
Amang his enemies a', man.

* From the Poet's Commonplace Book.
† Boghead lies a mile due west from Lochlea, near Adamhill.
‡ A Tarbolton elder, very penurious.
§ William Muir of Tarbolton Mill (of "Willie's Mill").

‖ "Virtue's side:" Goldsmith.
¶ Burns' politics always smell of the smithy, said Dr. Blair. True enough, but in the smithy there is often found the news of the country in a fiery essence.

Poor Tammy Gage within a cage
Was kept at Boston Ha', man;
Till Willie Howe took o'er the knowe
For Philadelphia, man:
Wi' sword an' gun he thought a sin
Guid Christian blood to draw, man;
But at New York, wi' knife an' fork,
Sir-loin he hackèd sma', man.

Burgoyne gaed up, like spur an' whip,
Till Fraser brave did fa', man;
Then lost his way, ae misty day,
In Saratoga shaw, man.
Cornwallis fought as lang 's he dought,
And did the buckskins claw, man;
But Clinton's glaive frae rust to save,
He hung it to the wa', man.

Then Montague, an' Guildford too,
Began to fear a fa', man;
And Sackville dour, wha stood the stoure,
The German Chief to thraw, man:
For Paddy Burke, like ony Turk,
Nae mercy had at a', man;
And Charlie Fox threw by the box,
And lowsed his tinkler jaw, man.

Then Rockingham took up the game;
Till death did on him ca', man;
When Shelburne meek held up his cheek,
Conform to gospel law, man.
Saint Stephen's boys, wi' jarring noise,
They did his measures thraw, man,
For North an' Fox united stocks,
And bore him to the wa', man.

Then clubs and hearts were Charlie's cartes,
He swept the stakes awa', man,
Till the diamond's ace, of Indian race,
Led him a sair *faux pas*, man:
The Saxon lads, wi' loud placads,
On Chatham's boy did ca', man;
An' Scotland drew her pipe, an' blew
"Up, Willie, waur them a', man!"

Behind the throne then Grenville 's gone,
A secret word or twa, man;
While slee Dundas aroused the class
Be-north the Roman wa', man:
And Chatham's wraith, in heavenly graith,
(Inspirèd bardies saw, man)
Wi' kindling eyes cried, "Willie, rise!
Would I hae fear'd them a', man?"

But, word an' blow, North, Fox, and Co.,
Gowff'd Willie like a ba', man,
Till Southron raise, and coost their claise
Behind him in a raw, man;
And Caledon threw by the drone,
And did her whittle draw, man;
And swore fu' rude, through dirt an' blood,
To mak it guid in law, man.

EPISTLE TO J. RANKINE, ENCLOSING SOME POEMS.*

O ROUGH, rude, ready-witted Rankine,
The wale o' cocks for fun and drinkin'!
There's mony godly folks are thinkin',
Your dreams † an' tricks
Will send you, Korah-like, a-sinkin',
Straught to Auld Nick's.

Ye hae sae mony cracks and cants,
And in your wicked, drucken rants,
Ye mak a devil o' the saunts,
And fill them fu':
And then their failings, flaws, an' wants,
Are a' seen through.

Hypocrisy, in mercy spare it!
That holy robe, O dinna tear it!
Spare 't for their sakes wha aften wear it,
The lads in black!
But your curst wit, when it comes near it,
Rives 't aff their back.

Think, wicked sinner, wha ye're skaithing:
It's just the blue-gown ‡ badge and claithing
O' saunts; tak that, ye lea'e them naething
To ken them by,
Frae ony unregenerate heathen
Like you or I.

I 've sent you here some rhyming ware,
A' that I bargain'd for, and mair;
Sae, when ye hae an hour to spare,
I will expect
Yon sang,§ ye'll sen't wi' cannie care,
And no neglect.

Though, faith, sma' heart hae I to sing!
My Muse dow scarcely spread her wing;
I 've play'd mysel' a bonnie spring,
And danced my fill!
I 'd better gaen an' sair'd the king
At Bunker's Hill.

'Twas ae night lately, in my fun,
I gaed a roving wi' the gun,
And brought a paitrick to the grun',
A bonnie hen;
And, as the twilight was begun,
Thought nane wad ken.

The poor wee thing was little hurt;
I straikit it a wee for sport,
Ne'er thinkin' they wad fash me for 't;
But, deil-ma-care!
Somebody tells the poacher-court
The hale affair.

Some auld-used hands had ta'en a note,
That sic a hen had got a shot;
I was suspected for the plot;
I scorn'd to lie;
So gat the whissle o' my groat,
An' pay't the fee.

But, by my gun, o' guns the wale,
And by my pouther an' my hail,
And by my hen, and by her tail,
I vow an' swear!
The game shall pay o'er moor an' dale,
For this, neist year.

As soon 's the clockin'-time is by,
And the wee pouts begun to cry,
L—d, I 'se hae sportin' by an' by
For my gowd guinea:
Though I should herd the buckskin kye
For 't, in Virginia.

* See LIFE.

† "Dreams:" a certain humorous *dream* of his was then making a noise in the countryside.—(B.) Rankine was a farmer in Adamhill, near Lochlea, a boon companion of Burns. He once, by filling a kettle with spirits instead of hot water, made a great professor of religion very drunk.

‡ "Blue-gown:" see "The Antiquary."

§ "Yon sang:" a song he had promised to the author.—(B.)

Trowth, they had muckle for to blame!
'Twas neither broken wing nor limb,
But twa-three draps about the wame
Scarce through the feathers;
And baith a yellow George to claim,
And thole their blethers!

It pits me aye as mad 's a hare;
So I can rhyme nor write nae mair;
But pennyworths again is fair,
When time 's expedient;
Meanwhile I am, respected Sir,
Your most obedient.

REPLY TO JOHN RANKINE,*

ON HIS WRITING TO THE POET THAT A GIRL IN THAT PART OF THE COUNTRY WAS WITH CHILD BY HIM.

I AM a keeper of the law
In some sma' points, although not a';
Some people tell me gin I fa',
Ae way or ither,
The breaking of ae point, though sma',
Breaks a' thegither.

I hae been in for't ance or twice,
And winna say o'er far for thrice,
Yet never met with that surprise
That broke my rest;
But now a rumour's like to rise—
A whaup 's i' the nest.

A POET'S WELCOME TO HIS ILLEGITIMATE CHILD.†

THOU 's welcome, wean! mishanter fa' me,
If ought of thee, or of thy mammy,
Shall ever danton me, or awe me,
My sweet wee lady,
Or if I blush when thou shalt ca' me
Tit-ta, or daddy.

Wee image of my bonnie Betty,
As fatherly I kiss and dant thee,
As dear and near my heart I set thee
Wi' as gude will,
As a' the priests had seen me get thee
That 's out o' hell.

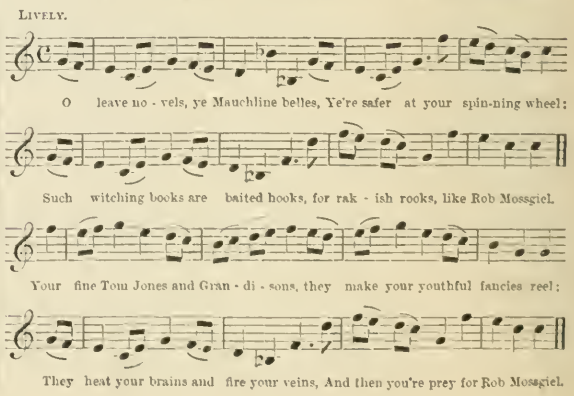
What though they ca' me fornicator,
And tease my name in kintra clatter:
The mair they talk I'm kent the better,
E'en let them clash;
An auld wife's tongue 's a feckless matter
To gie ane fash.

Sweet fruit o' mony a merry dint,
My funny toil is now a' tint,
Sin' thou cam to the warl' asklent,
Which fools may scoff at;
In my last plack thy part 's be in 't—
The better half o 't.

And if thou be what I would hae thee,
And tak the counsel I shall gie thee,
A lovin' father I 'll be to thee,
If thou be spared:
Through a' thy childish years I 'll e'e thee,
And think 't weel wared.

Gude grant that thou may aye inherit
Thy mither's person, grace, and merit,
And thy poor worthless daddy's spirit,
Without his failins;
'Twill please me mair to hear and see it,
Than stockit mailins.

O, LEAVE NOVELS, YE MAUCHLINE BELLES.


LIVELY.
O leave no - vels, ye Mauchline belles, Ye're safer at your spin-ning wheel;
Such witching books are baited hooks, for rak - ish rooks, like Rob Mossgiel.
Your fine Tom Jones and Gran - di - sons, they make your youthful fancies reel;
They heat your brains and fire your veins, And then you're prey for Rob Mossgiel.

* See LIFE.

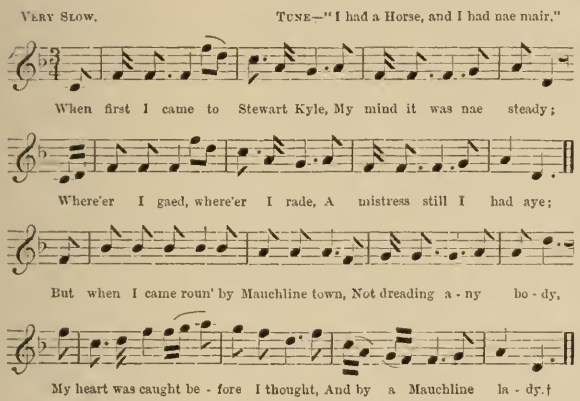
† The subject of these verses was the poet's illegitimate daughter, whom in "The Inventory" he styles his

"Sonsy, smirking, dear-bought Bess."

She was married to Mr. John Bishop, overseer at Polkemmet, near Whitburn, and is long dead.—See LIFE.

Beware a tongue that 's smoothly hung,
A heart that warmly seems to feel;
That feeling heart but acts a part—
'Tis rakish art in Rob Mossgiel.
The frank address, the soft caress,
Are worse than poison'd darts of steel;
The frank address and politesse
Are all finesse in Rob Mossgiel.

WHEN FIRST I CAME TO STEWART KYLE.*


Very Slow.
Tune—"I had a Horse, and I had nae mair."
When first I came to Stewart Kyle, My mind it was nae steady;
Where'er I gaed, where'er I rade, A mistress still I had aye;
But when I came roun' by Mauchline town, Not dreading a-ny bo-dy,
My heart was caught be-fore I thought, And by a Mauchline la-dy.†

MY GIRL SHE'S AIRY, SHE'S BUXOM AND GAY.

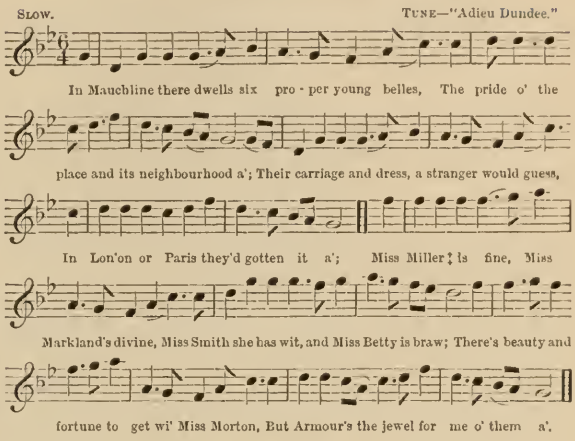
My girl she's airy, she's buxom and gay;
Her breath is as sweet as the blossoms in May;
A touch of her lips it ravishes quite:
She's always good natur'd, good humor'd, and free;
She dances, she glances, she smiles upon me;
I never am happy when out of her sight.

Her slender neck, her handsome waist,
Her hair well curled, her stays well lac'd,
Her taper white leg with . . .
For her . . . . . .
And O for the joys of a long winter night.

* Stewart Kyle—the district between the rivers Irvine and Ayr. Burns originally belonged to King's Kyle, between the Ayr and the Doon.

† Mauchline "lady"—Jean Armour.

IN MAUCHLINE THERE DWELLS.


Slow.
Tune—"Adieu Dundee."
In Mauchline there dwells six pro-per young belles, The pride o' the
place and its neighbourhood a'; Their carriage and dress, a stranger would guess,
In Lon'on or Paris they'd gotten it a'; Miss Miller‡ is fine, Miss
Markland's divine, Miss Smith she has wit, and Miss Betty is braw; There's beauty and
fortune to get wi' Miss Morton, But Armour's the jewel for me o' them a'.

EPITAPH ON A NOISY POLEMIC.

Below thir stanes lie Jamie's§ banes:
O Death, it 's my opinion,
Thou ne'er took such a bleth'rin bitch
Into thy dark dominion!

ON A HENPECKED COUNTRY SQUIRE.‖

As father Adam first was fool'd
(A case that 's still too common),
Here lies a man a-woman ruled—
The devil ruled the woman.

ON THE SAME.

O Death, hadst thou but spared his life,
Whom we this day lament!
We freely wad exchanged the wife,
And a' been weel content.

‡ "Miss Miller:" married Dr. Mackenzie, a friend of Burns; Miss Markland, Mr. Findlay, a gauger in Greenock; Miss Betty (Miller), sister of the former Miss Miller, became Mrs. Templeton; Miss Morton, Mrs. Paterson of Mauchline; Miss Smith married Mr. Candlish, and became the mother of the celebrated Dr. Candlish, and died in 1874.

§ "Jamie:" Humphrey, a west country mason, fond of controversy. He died in 1844, at the age of 86, an inmate of Faile poor-house.

‖ Campbell of Netherplace, between Mauchline and Mossgiel.

Even as he is, cauld in his graff,
The swap we yet will do 't;
Tak thou the carlin's carcase aff,
Thou 'se get the saul o' boot.

ONE QUEEN ARTEMISA.

One Queen Artemisa, as old stories tell,
When deprived of her husband she lovèd so well,
In respect for the love and affection he 'd show'd her,
She reduced him to dust, and she drank off the powder.

But Queen Netherplace, of a different complexion,
When call'd on to order the funeral direction,
Would have eat her dead lord, on a slender pretence,
Not to show her respect, but—to save the expense.

ON TAM THE CHAPMAN.*

As Tam the Chapman, on a day,
Wi' Death forgather'd by the way,
Weel pleased, he greets a wight sae famous,
And Death was nae less pleased wi' Thomas,
Wha cheerfully lays down the pack,
And there blaws up a hearty crack:
His social, friendly, honest heart
Sae tickled Death, they could na part:
Sae, after viewing knives and garters,
Death takes him hame to gi'e him quarters.

VERSES TO J. RANKINE.†

Ae day, as Death, that gruesome carle,
Was driving to the tither warl'
A mixtie-maxtie motley squad,
And mony a guilt bespotted lad;
Black gowns of each denomination,
And thieves of every rank and station,
From him that wears the star and garter,
To him that wintles in a halter:
Ashamed himsel' to see the wretches,
He mutters, glow'rin' at the bitches,
"By G—d, I'll not be seen behint them,
Nor 'mang the sp'ritual core present them,
Without at least ae honest man
To grace this damned infernal clan."
By Adamhill a glance he threw,
"L—d G—d!" quoth he, "I have it now;
There's just the man I want, i' faith,"
And quickly stoppit Rankine's breath.

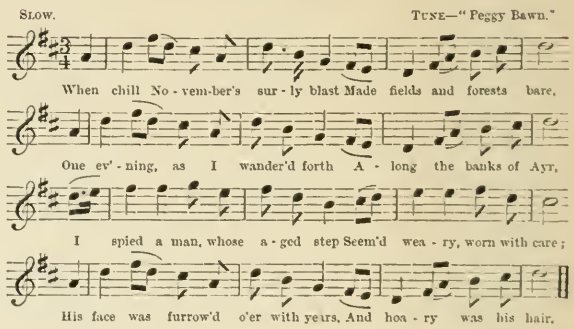
LINES WRITTEN BY BURNS ON HIS OWN SUPPOSED DEATH, AND ADDRESSED TO RANKINE.

He who of Rankine sang lies stiff and dead,
And a green grassy hillock hides his head;
Alas! alas! an awful change indeed!

MAN WAS MADE TO MOURN:‡

A DIRGE.

Slow. Tune—"Peggy Bawn."


When chill No - vem-ber's sur - ly blast Made fields and forests bare,
One ev' - ning, as I wander'd forth A - long the banks of Ayr,
I spied a man, whose a - ged step Seem'd wea - ry, worn with care;
His face was furrow'd o'er with years, And hoa - ry was his hair.

"Young stranger, whither wanderest thou?"
Began the reverend sage;
"Does thirst of wealth thy step constrain,
Or youthful pleasure's rage?
Or haply, press'd with cares and woes,
Too soon thou hast began
To wander forth, with me, to mourn
The miseries of man!

* "Tam the Chapman:" one Kennedy of Ayr, who had recovered from an illness, and met the poet. Communicated by William Cobbett, who met Tam in London, and published the lines in his Register. Tam became a commercial traveller, and died in London.

† "J. Rankine:" the person to whom a former epistle was addressed, while Rankine occupied the farm of Adamhill, in Ayrshire.

‡ Partly imitated from an old ballad, "The Life and Age of Man." This was the song Burns' old grand-uncle used to like to listen to and weep at, from his mother's lips. This poem of Burns' was a special favourite of De Quincey. It was written in November, 1784, to the fine old tune of "Peggy Bawn."

"The sun that overhangs yon moors,
Out-spreading far and wide,
Where hundreds labour to support
A haughty lordling's pride—
I 've seen yon weary winter-sun
Twice forty times return;
And every time has added proofs
That man was made to mourn.

"O man! while in thy early years,
How prodigal of time!
Mis-spending all thy precious hours,
Thy glorious, youthful prime!
Alternate follies take the sway;
Licentious passions burn;
Which tenfold force gives Nature's law,
That man was made to mourn.

"Look not alone on youthful prime,
Or manhood's active might;
Man then is useful to his kind,
Supported is his right:
But see him on the edge of life,
With cares and sorrows worn,
Then Age and Want—oh! ill-match'd pair!—
Show man was made to mourn.

"A few seem favourites of fate,
In pleasure's lap caress'd;
Yet, think not all the rich and great
Are likewise truly blest.
But, oh! what crowds in every land,
All wretched and forlorn,
Through weary life this lesson learn—
That man was made to mourn.

"Many and sharp the numerous ills
Inwoven with our frame!
More pointed still we make ourselves,
Regret, remorse, and shame!
And man, whose heaven-erected face
The smiles of love adorn—
Man's inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn!

See yonder poor, o'erlabour'd wight,
So abject, mean, and vile,
Who begs a brother of the earth
To give him leave to toil;
And see his lordly fellow-worm
The poor petition spurn,
Unmindful, though a weeping wife
And helpless offspring mourn.

"If I 'm design'd yon lordling's slave—
By Nature's law design'd—
Why was an independent wish
E'er planted in my mind?
If not, why am I subject to
His cruelty or scorn?
Or why has man the will and power
To make his fellow mourn?

"Yet, let not this too much, my son,
Disturb thy youthful breast:
This partial view of human-kind
Is surely not the last!
The poor, oppressèd, honest man,
Had never, sure, been born,
Had there not been some recompense
To comfort those that mourn!

"O Death! the poor man's dearest friend—
The kindest and the best!
Welcome the hour my aged limbs
Are laid with thee at rest!
The great, the wealthy, fear thy blow,
From pomp and pleasure torn;
But, oh! a blest relief to those
That weary-laden mourn!"

THE HOLY TULZIE, OR TWA HERDS.*

O a' ye pious godly flocks,
Weel fed on pastures orthodox,
Wha now will keep you frae the fox,
Or worrying tykes?
Or wha will tent the waifs and crocks,
About the dykes?

The twa best herds in a' the wast,
That e'er gae gospel horn a blast,
These five-and-twenty simmers past,
Oh! dool to tell,
Hae had a bitter black outcast
Atween themsel'.

O, Moody, man, and wordy Russell,
How could you raise so vile a bustle?
Ye'll see how New-Light herds will whistle,
And think it fine!
The Lord's cause ne'er gat sic a twistle,
Sin' I hae min'.

O, sirs! wha e'er wad hae expeckit,
Your duty ye wad sae negleckit,
Ye wha were ne'er by lairds respeckit
To wear the plaid,
But by the brutes themselves eleckit,
To be their guide.

What flock wi' Moody's flock could rank,
Sae hale and hearty every shank!
Nae poison'd sour Arminian stank
He let them taste;
Frae Calvin's well aye clear they drank—
O sic a feast!

The thummart, wil'-cat, brock, and tod,
Weel kenn'd his voice through a' the wood,
He smelt their ilka hole and road,
Baith out and in;
And weel he lik'd to shed their bluid,
And sell their skin.

What herd like Russell tell'd his tale?
His voice was heard through muir and dale,
He kenn'd the L—d's sheep, ilka tail,
O'er a' the height,
And saw gin they were sick or hale,
At the first sight.

He fine a mangy sheep could scrub,
Or nobly fling the gospel club,
And New-Light herds could nicely drub,
Or pay their skin;
Could shake them o'er the burning dub,
Or heave them in.

Sic twa—oh! do I live to see 't!—
Sic famous twa should disagree 't,
And names like "villain," "hypocrite,"
Ilk ither gi'en,
While New-Light herds, wi' laughin' spite,
Say neither's lien'!

A' ye wha tent the gospel fauld,
There 's Duncan† deep, and Peebles‡ shaul,
But chiefly thou, apostle Auld,§
We trust in thee,
That thou wilt work them, hot and cauld,
Till they agree.

* "Twa Herds:" the two herds or pastors were Mr. Moody, minister of Riccartoun, and that favourite victim of Burns, John Russell, then minister at Kilmarnock, and afterwards of Stirling.—See HOLY FAIR. This was the first of Burns' productions that saw the light; it was founded on a dispute—subject uncertain—between the two divines.—See LIFE.

† Minister of Dundonald. § Minister of Newton-on-Ayr.
‡ Minister of Mauchline.

Consider, sirs, how we 're beset;
There 's scarce a new herd that we get,
But comes frae 'mang that cursed set
I winna name;
I hope frae heaven to see them yet
In fiery flame!

Dalrymple* has been lang our fae,
M'Gill† has wrought us meikle wae,
And that curs'd rascal ca'd M'Quhae,‡
And baith the Shaws,§
That aft hae made us black and blae,
Wi' vengefu' paws.

Auld Wodrow‖ lang has hatch'd mischief;
We thought aye death would bring relief,
But he has gotten, to our grief,
Ane to succeed him,
A chiel wha 'll soundly buff our beef;
I meikle dread him.¶

And mony a ane that I could tell,
Wha fain would openly rebel,
Forby turn-coats amang oursel';
There 's Smith** for ane,
I doubt he 's but a gray-nick quill,
And that ye 'll fin'.

O! a' ye flocks o'er a' the hills,
By mosses, meadows, moors, and fells,
Come, join your counsel and your skills
To cowe the lairds,
And get the brutes the power themsel's
To choose their herds.

Then Orthodoxy yet may prance,
And Learning in a woodie dance,
And that fell cur ca'd Common Sense,
That bites sae sair,
Be banish'd o'er the sea to France:
Let him bark there.

Then Shaw's and D'rymple's eloquence,
M'Gill's close nervous excellence,
M'Quhae's pathetic manly sense,
And guid M'Math,
Wi' Smith, wha through the heart can glance,
May a' pack aff.

* Minister of Ayr, who baptized Burns.
† Minister of Ayr. ‡ Minister of St. Quivox.
§ Ministers of Craigie and Coylton. ‖ Minister of Tarbolton.
¶ "Dread him:" alluding to the Rev. Mr. M'Math, mentioned above.
** One of the preachers at the Holy Fair.

EPISTLE TO DAVIE, A BROTHER POET.††

While winds frae aff Ben-Lomond blaw,
And bar the doors wi' driving snaw,
And hing us owre the ingle,
I set me down to pass the time,
And spin a verse or twa o' rhyme,
In hamely westlin' jingle.
While frosty winds blaw in the drift.
Ben to the chimla lug,
I grudge a wee the great folks' gift,
That live sae bien an' snug:
I tent less, and want less,
Their roomy fireside;
But hanker and canker
To see their cursed pride.

It 's hardly in a body's power
To keep, at times, frae being sour,
To see how things are shared;
How best o' chiels are whiles in want,
While coofs on countless thousands rant,
And ken na how to ware 't:
But, Davie, lad, ne'er fash your head,
Though we hae little gear;
We 're fit to win our daily bread,
As lang 's we 're hale and fier.
"Mair spier na, nor fear na,"‡‡
Auld age ne'er mind a feg,
The last o 't, the warst o 't,
Is only for to beg.

To lie in kilns and barns at e'en,
When banes are crazed and bluid is thin,
Is, doubtless, great distress!
Yet then content could make us blest;
Even then, sometimes, we 'd snatch a taste
Of truest happiness.
The honest heart that 's free frae a'
Intended fraud or guile,
However Fortune kick the ba',
Has aye some cause to smile:
And mind still, you 'll find still,
A comfort this nae sma';
Nae mair then, we 'll care then,
Nae farther we can fa'.

What though, like commoners of air,
We wander out, we know not where,
But either house or hall?

†† "Brother poet:" David Sillar, one of the club at Tarbolton, and author of a volume of poems in the Scottish dialect. The original address was to "Davy, a brither-poet, lover, ploughman, and fiddler." He was the son of a small farmer at Tarbolton; became poet, grocer, schoolmaster, and magistrate at Irvine.
‡‡ "Fear na:" Ramsay.—(B.)

Yet nature's charms, the hills and woods,
The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,
  Are free alike to all.
In days when daisies deck the ground,
  And blackbirds whistle clear,
With honest joy our hearts will bound,
  To see the coming year:
    On braes when we please, then
      We 'll sit an' sowth a tune;
    Syne rhyme till 't, we 'll time till 't,
      And sing 't when we hae dune.

It 's no in titles nor in rank,
It 's no in wealth like Lon'on bank,
  To purchase peace and rest;
It 's no in making muckle mair,
It 's no in books, it 's no in lear,
  To make us truly blest:
If happiness hae not her seat
  And centre in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
  But never can be blest:
    Nae treasures, nor pleasures,
      Could make us happy lang;
    The heart aye 's the part aye
      That makes us right or wrang.

Think ye, that sic as you and I,
Wha drudge and drive through wet an' dry,
  Wi' never-ceasing toil;
Think ye, are we less blest than they,
Wha scarcely tent us in their way,
  As hardly worth their while?
Alas! how aft in haughty mood,
  God's creatures they oppress!
Or else, neglecting a' that 's guid,
  They riot in excess!
    Baith careless and fearless
      Of either heaven or hell;
    Esteeming and deeming
      It 's a' an idle tale!

Then let us cheerfu' acquiesce,
Nor make our scanty pleasures less
  By pining at our state;
And, even should misfortunes come,
I, here wha sit, hae met wi' some,
  An 's thankfu' for them yet:
They gie the wit of age to youth;
  They let us ken oursel';
They make us see the naked truth,
  The real guid and ill.
    Though losses and crosses
      Be lessons right severe,
    There 's wit there, ye 'll get there,
      Ye 'll find nae other where.

But tent me, Davie, ace o' hearts!
(To say aught less wad wrang the cartes,
  And flattery I detest)
This life has joys for you and I;
And joys that riches ne'er could buy,
  And joys the very best.
There 's a' the pleasures o' the heart,
  The lover an' the frien';
Ye hae your Meg,* your dearest part,
  And I my darling Jean!
    It warms me, it charms me,
      To mention but her name:
    It heats me, it beets me,
      And sets me a' on flame?

O all ye Powers who rule above!
O Thou, whose very self art Love!
  Thou know'st my words sincere!
The life-blood streaming through my heart,
Or my more dear immortal part,
  Is not more fondly dear!
When heart-corroding care and grief
  Deprive my soul of rest,
Her dear idea brings relief
  And solace to my breast.
    Thou Being, All-seeing,
      O hear my fervent prayer;
    Still take her, and make her
      Thy most peculiar care!

All hail, ye tender feelings dear!
The smile of love, the friendly tear,
  The sympathetic glow!
Long since, this world's thorny ways
Had number'd out my weary days,
  Had it not been for you!
Fate still has blest me with a friend,
  In every care and ill;
And oft a more endearing band,
  A tie more tender still.
    It lightens, it brightens,
      The tenebrific scene,
    To meet with, and greet with,
      My Davie or my Jean!

Oh, how that name inspires my style!
The words come skelpin', rank and file,
  Amaist before I ken!
The ready measure rins as fine,
As Phœbus and the famous Nine
  Were glowrin' owre my pen.
My spaviet Pegasus will limp,
  Till ance he 's fairly het;
And then he 'll hilch, and stilt, and jump,
  An' rin an unco fit:

* "Meg:" Margaret Orr, a servant of Mrs. Stewart of Stair. She did *not* marry Davie.

But lest then the beast then
Should rue this hasty ride,
I 'll light now, and dight now
His sweaty wizen'd hide.

HOLY WILLIE'S PRAYER.*

O Thou, wha in the heavens dost dwell,
Wha, as it pleases best thysel',
Sends ane to heaven, and ten to hell,
A' for thy glory,
And no for ony guid or ill
They've done afore thee!

I bless and praise thy matchless might,
Whan thousands thou hast left in night,
That I am here afore thy sight,
For gifts and grace,
A burnin' and a shinin' light
To a' this place.

What was I, or my generation,
That I should get sic exaltation,
I wha deserve sic just damnation
For broken laws,
Five thousand years 'fore my creation,
Through Adam's cause!

When frae my mither's womb I fell,
Thou might hae plungèd me in hell,
To gnash my gums, to weep and wail,
In burnin' lake,
Whare damnèd devils roar and yell,
Chain'd to a stake.

Yet I am here, a chosen sample,
To show thy grace is great and ample;
I'm here a pillar in thy temple,
Strong as a rock,
A guide, a buckler, and example,
To a' thy flock.

O L—d! thou kens what zeal I bear,
When drinkers drink, and swearers swear,
And singin' there, and dancin' here,
Wi' great an' sma';
For I am keepit by thy fear
Free frae them a'.

But yet, O L—d! confess I must,
At times I'm fash'd wi' fleshly lust;
And sometimes, too, wi' warldly trust
Vile self gets in:
But thou remembers we are dust,
Defiled in sin.

O L—d! yestreen, thou kens, wi' Meg—
Thy pardon I sincerely beg,
Oh! may 't ne'er be a livin' plague,
To my dishonour,
And I 'll ne'er lift a lawless leg
Again upon her.

Besides, I farther maun avow,
Wi' Leezie's lass, three times I trow;
But, L—d! that Friday I was fou,
When I cam near her,
Or else, thou kens, thy servant true
Wad ne'er hae steer'd her.

Maybe thou lets this fleshly thorn
Beset thy servant e'en and morn,
Lest he owre high and proud should turn,
'Cause he's sae gifted;
If sae, thy han' maun e'en be borne,
Until thou lift it.

L—d, bless thy chosen in this place,
For here thou hast a chosen race;
But G—d confound their stubborn face,
And blast their name,
Wha bring thy elders to disgrace
And public shame.

L—d! mind Gaw'n Hamilton's deserts;
He drinks, and swears, and plays at cartes,
Yet has sae mony takin' arts,
Wi' grit and sma',
Frae G—d's ain priests the people's hearts
He steals awa'.

And when we chasten'd him therefor,
Thou kens how he bred sic a splore,
As set the warld in a roar
O' laughin' at us:
Curse thou his basket and his store,
Kail and potatoes.

L—d, hear my earnest cry and prayer,
Against that Presbyt'ry of Ayr;
Thy strong right hand, L—d, make it bare,
Upo' their heads,
L—d, weigh it down, and dinna spare,
For their misdeeds.

* "Holy Willie:" William Fisher, a hypocritical elder in Mauchline.—See Life.

O L—d my G—d! that glib-tongued Aiken,
My very heart and saul are quakin',
To think how I sat sweatin', shakin',
And p—d wi' dread,
While he, wi' hingin' lip an' snakin',
Held up his head.

L—d, in the day of vengeance try him,
L—d, visit them wha did employ him,
And pass not in thy mercy by 'em,
Nor hear their prayer;
But for thy people's sake destroy 'em,
And dinna spare.

But, L—d, remember me and mine
Wi' mercies temporal and divine,
That I for gear and grace may shine,
Excell'd by nane,
And a' the glory shall be thine,
Amen! Amen!

EPITAPH ON HOLY WILLIE.

Here Holy Willie's sair-worn clay
Taks up its last abode;
His saul has ta'en some other way,
I fear, the left-hand road.

Stop! there he is, as sure 's a gun,
Poor silly body, see him;
Nae wonder he's as black's the grun'
Observe wha's standing wi' him.

Your brunstane devilship, I see,
Has got him there before ye;
But haud your nine-tail cat a wee,
Till ance ye've heard my story.

Your pity I will not implore,
For pity ye hae nane!
Justice, alas! has gi'en him o'er,
And Mercy's day is gane.

But hear me, sir, deil as ye are,
Look something to your credit;
A coof like him would stain your name,
If it were kent ye did it.

DEATH AND DOCTOR HORNBOOK:

A TRUE STORY.

Some books are lies frae end to end,
And some great lies were never penn'd:
Ev'n ministers, they hae been kenn'd,
In holy rapture,
A rousing whid * at times to vend,
And nail't wi' Scripture.

But this that I am gaun to tell,
Which lately on a night befell,
Is just as true 's the deil 's in hell,
Or Dublin city:
That e'er he nearer comes oursel'
'S a muckle pity.

The clachan yill had made me canty:
I was na fou, but just had plenty;
I stacher'd whyles, but yet took tent aye
To free the ditches;
An' hillocks, stanes, and bushes kenn'd aye
Frae ghaists an' witches.

The rising moon began to glowre
The distant Cumnock hills outowre:
To count her horns, wi' a' my power,
I set mysel';
But whether she had three or four,
I could na tell.

I was come round about the hill,
And todlin' down on Willie's mill,†
Setting my staff wi' a' my skill,
To keep me sicker;
Though leeward whyles, against my will,
I took a bicker.

I there wi' Something did forgather,
That pat me in an eerie swither;
An awfu' scythe, outowre ae shouther,
Clear-dangling, hang;
A three-taed leister on the ither
Lay, large an' lang.

Its stature seem'd lang Scotch ells twa,
The queerest shape that e'er I saw,
For fient a wame it had ava;
And then its shanks,
They were as thin, an' sharp, an' sma',
As cheeks o' branks.

* "A rousin whid:" in Second Edition—

"Great lies and nonsense baith to vend."

† "Willie's mill:" a mill near Tarbolton, on the river Faile, occupied by William Muir, a crony of Burns, and whose name appears as a subscriber to the Edinburgh edition of Burns' works.

"Guid-e'en'," quo' I; "Friend, hae ye been mawin',
When ither folk are busy sawin'?"*
It seem'd to mak a kind o' stan',
But naething spak;
At length, says I, "Friend, whare ye gaun?—
Will ye go back?"

It spak right howe—"My name is Death,
But be na fley'd." Quoth I, "Guid faith,
Ye 're maybe come to stap my breath;
But tent me, billie—
I red ye weel, tak care o' skaith,
See, there 's a gullie!"

"Guidman," quo' he, "put up your whittle,
I 'm no design'd to try its mettle;
But if I did, I wad be kittle
To be mislear'd,
I wad na mind it, no that spittle
Outowre my beard."

"Weel, weel," says I, "a bargain be 't;
Come, gie 's your hand, an' sae we 're gree 't;
We 'll ease our shanks an' tak a seat—
Come, gie 's your news;
This while † ye hae been mony a gate,
At mony a house."

"Ay, ay!" quo' he, an' shook his head,
"It 's e'en a lang, lang time indeed
Sin' I began to nick the thread,
An' choke the breath:
Folk maun do something for their bread
An' sae maun Death.

* "Busy sawin':" this rencounter happened in seed-time, 1785.—(B.)

† "This while:" an epidemical fever was then raging in that country.—(B.)

"Sax thousand years are near-hand fled,
Sin' I was to the butching bred,
An' mony a scheme in vain 's been laid,
To stap or scaur me;
Till ane Hornbook * 's ta'en up the trade,
An' faith! he 'll waur me.

"Ye ken Jock Hornbook † i' the clachan,
Deil mak his king's-hood in a spleuchan!
He 's grown sae weel acquant wi' Buchan ‡
An' ither chaps,
The weans haud out their fingers laughin'
And pouk my hips.

"See, here 's a scythe, and there 's a dart,
They hae pierced mony a gallant heart;
But Doctor Hornbook, wi' his art
And cursed skill,
Has made them baith no worth a f—t;
Damn'd haet they 'll kill.

"'Twas but yestreen, nae farther gaen,
I threw a noble throw at ane;
Wi' less, I 'm sure, I 've hundreds slain;
But deil-ma-care,
It just play'd dirl on the bane,
But did nae mair.

"Hornbook was by, wi' ready art,
And had sae fortified the part,
That when I lookèd to my dart,
It was sae blunt,
Fient haet o 't wad hae pierced the heart
O' a kail-runt.

"I drew my scythe in sic a fury,
I near-hand cowpit wi' my hurry,
But yet the bauld apothecary
Withstood the shock;
I might as weel hae tried a quarry
O' hard whin rock.

"Ev'n them he canna get attended,
Although their face he ne'er had kenn'd it,
Just s—— in a kail-blade, and send it,
As soon 's he smells 't,
Baith their disease, and what will mend it,
At once he tells 't.

"And then a' doctor's saws and whittles,
Of a' dimensions, shapes, an' mettles,
A' kinds o' boxes, mugs, an' bottles,
He 's sure to hae;
Their Latin names as fast he rattles
As A, B, C.

"Calces o' fossils, earths, and trees;
True sal-marinum o' the seas;
The farina of beans an pease,
He has 't in plenty;
Aqua-fontis, what you please,
He can content ye.

"Forbye some new, uncommon weapons,
Urinus spiritus of capons;
Or mite-horn shavings, filings, scrapings,
Distill'd *per se;*
Sal-alkali o' midge-tail clippings,
And mony mae."

"Waes me for Johnny Ged's hole § now,"
Quo' I; "if that the news be true,
His braw calf-ward, whare gowans grew
Sae white and bonnie,
Nae doubt they 'll rive it wi' the plew;
They 'll ruin Johnny!"

The creature grain'd an eldritch laugh,
And says, "Ye needna yoke the pleugh,
Kirkyards will soon be till'd enough,
Tak ye nae fear:
They 'll a' be trench'd wi' mony a sheugh
In twa-three year.

"Whare I kill'd ane a fair strae death,
By loss o' blood or want o' breath,
This night I 'm free to tak my aith,
That Hornbook's skill
Has clad a score i' their last claith,
By drap an' pill.

"An honest wabster to his trade,
Whase wife's twa nieves were scarce weel-bred,
Gat tippence-worth to mend her head,
When it was sair;
The wife slade cannie to her bed,
But ne'er spak mair.

"A countra laird had ta'en the batts,
Or some curmurring in his guts;
His only son for Hornbook sets,
An' pays him well:
The lad, for twa guid gimmer pets,
Was laird himsel'.

* "Hornbook:" this gentleman, Dr. Hornbook, is professionally a brother of the Sovereign Order of the Ferula; but, by intuition and inspiration, is at once an apothecary, surgeon, and physician.—(B.)

† "Jock Hornbook:" John Wilson, a grocer, schoolmaster, and would-be apothecary in Tarbolton.—(B.) He and Burns had a quarrel. He became teacher and session-clerk in the Gorbals, Glasgow, and died in 1839.

‡ "Buchan:" Buchan's "Domestic Medicine"—once a most popular book. We have seen its 20th edition.

§ "Johnny Ged's hole:" the grave-digger.

"A bonnie lass, ye kend her name,
Some ill-brewn drink had hoved her wame;
She trusts hersel', to hide the shame,
In Hornbook's care;
Horn sent her aff to her lang hame,
To hide it there.

That 's just a swatch o' Hornbook's way;
Thus goes he on from day to day,
Thus does he poison, kill, an' slay,
An 's weel paid for 't;
Yet stops me o' my lawfu' prey,
Wi' his damn'd dirt:

"But, hark! I 'll tell you of a plot,
Though dinna ye be speaking o 't;
I 'll nail the self-conceited sot
As dead 's a herrin':
Neist time we meet, I 'll wad a groat,
He gets his fairin'!"

But just as he began to tell,
The auld kirk-hammer strak the bell
Some wee short hour ayont the twal,
Which raised us baith:
I took the way that pleased mysel',
And sae did Death.

FIRST EPISTLE TO JOHN LAPRAIK,* AN OLD SCOTTISH BARD.

APRIL 1, 1785.

While briars an' woodbines budding green,
An' paitricks scraichin' loud at e'en,
An' morning poussie whiddin' seen,
Inspire my muse,
This freedom in an unknown frien'
I pray excuse.

On Fasten-e'en † we had a rockin',
To ca' the crack and weave our stockin';
And there was muckle fun an' jokin'
Ye need na doubt:
At length we had a hearty yokin'
At sang about.

There was ae sang, amang the rest,
Aboon them a' it pleased me best,
That some kind husband had address'd
To some sweet wife:
It thirled the heart-strings through the breast,
A' to the life.

I 've scarce heard ought described sae weel,
What generous, manly bosoms feel;
Thought I, "Can this be Pope, or Steele,
Or Beattie's wark?"
They tauld me 'twas an odd kind chiel
About Muirkirk.

It pat me fidgin-fain to hear 't,
And sae about him there I spier't;
Then a' that kent him round declared
He had ingine,
That nane excell'd it, few cam near 't,
It was sae fine;

That, set him to a pint of ale,
An' either douce or merry tale,
Or rhymes an' sangs he 'd made himsel',
Or witty catches,
'Tween Inverness an' Teviotdale,
He had few matches.

Then up I gat, and swoor an aith,
Though I should pawn my pleugh and graith,
Or die a cadger pownie's death
At some dyke back,
A pint and gill I 'd gie them baith
To hear your crack.

But, first and foremost, I should tell,
Amaist as soon as I could spell,
I to the crambo-jingle fell;
Though rude and rough,
Yet crooning to a body's sel'
Does weel eneugh.

I am nae poet, in a sense,
But just a rhymer, like, by chance,
And hae to learning nae pretence;
Yet, what the matter?
Whene'er my muse does on me glance,
I jingle at her.

Your critic-folk may cock their nose,
And say, "How can you e'er propose,
You, wha ken hardly verse frae prose,
To mak a sang?"
But, by your leave, my learned foes,
Ye 're maybe wrang.

What 's a' your jargon o' your schools,
Your Latin names for horns an' stools?
If honest Nature made you fools,
What sairs your grammars?
Ye 'd better ta'en up spades and shools,
Or knappin'-hammers.

* "Lapraik:" an old rhymster, residing in Muirkirk. The song that pleased Burns was borrowed from an old ditty.

† "Fasten-e'en:" Shrovetide, a festival that used to be religiously held in Scotland.

A set o' dull, conceited hashes,
Confuse their brains in college classes!
They gang in stirks, and come out asses,
Plain truth to speak;
And syne they think to climb Parnassus
By dint o' Greek!

Gie me ae spark o' Nature's fire,
That 's a' the learning I desire;
Then though I trudge through dub an' mire
At pleugh or cart,
My muse, though hamely in attire,
May touch the heart.

O for a spunk o' Allan's glee,
Or Fergusson's, the bauld and slee,
Or bright Lapraik's, my friend to be,
If I can hit it!
That would be lear enough for me,
If I could get it.

Now, sir, if ye hae friends enow,
Though, real friends, I b'lieve, are few,
Yet, if your catalogue be fu',
I 'se no insist;
But, gif ye want ae friend that 's true,
I 'm on your list.

I winna blaw about mysel',
As ill I like my fauts to tell;
But friends, and folk that wish me well,
They sometimes roose me;
Though, I maun own, as mony still
As far abuse me.

There 's ae wee faut they whyles lay to me,
I like the lasses—Gude forgie me!
For mony a plack they wheedle frae me
At dance or fair;
Maybe some ither thing they gie me,
They weel can spare.

But Mauchline race, or Mauchline fair,
I should be proud to meet you there;
We 'se gie ae night's discharge to care,
If we forgather,
And hae a swap o' rhymin'-ware
Wi' ane anither.

The four-gill chap, we 'se gar him clatter,
And kirsen him wi' reekin' water;
Syne we 'll sit down and tak our whitter,
To cheer our heart;
And faith, we 'se be acquainted better
Before we part.

Awa', ye selfish, warly race,
Wha think that havins, sense, an' grace,
Even love an' friendship, should give place
To catch-the-plack!
I dinna like to see your face,
Nor hear your crack.

But ye whom social pleasure charms,
Whose heart the tide of kindness warms,
Who hold your being on the terms,
"Each aid the others,"
Come to my bowl, come to my arms,
My friends, my brothers!

But, to conclude my lang epistle,
As my auld pen 's worn to the grissle,
Twa lines frae you wad gar me fissle,
Who am most fervent,
While I can either sing or whistle,
Your friend and servant.

SECOND EPISTLE TO JOHN LAPRAIK.*

APRIL 21, 1785.

While new-ca'd kye rowte at the stake,
An' pownies reek in pleugh or braik,
This hour on e'enin's edge I take,
To own I 'm debtor
To honest-hearted, auld Lapraik,
For his kind letter.

Forjesket sair, wi' weary legs,
Rattlin' the corn outowre the rigs,
Or dealing through amang the naigs
Their ten-hours' bite,
My awkward muse sair pleads and begs,
I would na write.

The tapetless, ramfeezled hizzie,
She 's saft at best and something lazy;
Quo' she, "Ye ken we 've been sae busy
This month an' mair,
That, trowth! my head is grown right dizzie,
An' something sair."

Her dowff excuses pat me mad:
"Conscience," says I, "ye thowless jad!
I 'll write, and that a hearty blaud,
This vera night;
So dinna ye affront your trade,
But rhyme it right.

* Burns, when he received Lapraik's reply, was sowing. As he eagerly perused the letter, which was in rhyme, he dropt the sheet and spilt the corn.

"Shall bauld Lapraik, the king o' hearts,
Though mankind were a pack o' cartes,
Roose you sae weel for your deserts,
In terms sae friendly,
Yet ye 'll neglect to shaw your parts,
And thank him kindly?"

Sae I gat paper in a blink,
An' down gaed stumpie in the ink:
Quoth I, "Before I sleep a wink,
I vow I 'll close it;
And if ye winna mak it clink,
By Jove, I 'll prose it!"

Sae I 've begun to scrawl, but whether
In rhyme, or prose, or baith thegither,
Or some hotch-potch that 's rightly neither,
Let time mak proof;
But I shall scribble down some blether
Just clean aff-loof.

My worthy friend, ne'er grudge an' carp,
Though fortune use you hard an' sharp;
Come, kittle up your moorland harp
Wi' gleesome touch!
Ne'er mind how Fortune waft an' warp—
She 's but a bitch.

She 's gien me mony a jirt an' fleg,
Sin' I could striddle owre a rig;
But, by the L—d, though I should beg
Wi' lyart pow,
I 'll laugh, an' sing, an' shake my leg,
As lang 's I dow!

Now comes the sax-and-twentieth simmer
I 've seen the bud upo' the timmer,
Still persecuted by the limmer
Frae year to year;
But yet, despite the kittle kimmer,
I, Rob, am here.

Do ye envy the city gent,
Behint a kist to lie and sklent,
Or purse-proud, big wi' cent. per cent.
An' muckle wame,
In some bit brugh to represent
A bailie's name?

Or is 't the paughty feudal Thane,
Wi' ruffled sark and glancing cane,
Wha thinks himsel' nae sheep-shank bane,
But lordly stalks,
While caps and bonnets aff are taen,
As by he walks?

O Thou, wha gies us each guid gift!
Gie me o' wit an' sense a lift,
Then turn me, if Thou please, adrift
Through Scotland wide;
Wi' cits nor lairds I wadna shift,
In a' their pride!

Were this the charter of our state,
"On pain o' hell be rich an' great,"
Damnation then would be our fate,
Beyond remead;
But, thanks to Heaven! that 's no the gate
We learn our creed.

For thus the royal mandate ran,
When first the human race began—
"The social, friendly, honest man,
Whate'er he be,
'Tis he fulfils great Nature's plan,
An' none but he!"

O mandate glorious and divine!
The ragged followers of the Nine—
Poor, thoughtless devils—yet may shine
In glorious light,
While sordid sons of Mammon's line
Are dark as night.

Though here they scrape, an' squeeze, an' growl,
Their worthless nievefu' of a soul
May in some future carcase howl,
The forest's fright;
Or in some day-detesting owl
May shun the light.

Then may Lapraik * and Burns arise,
To reach their native, kindred skies,
And sing their pleasures, hopes, and joys,
In some mild sphere,
Still closer knit in friendship's ties,
Each passing year!

EPISTLE TO WILLIAM SIMSON.†

OCHILTREE.—MAY, 1785.

I GAT your letter, winsome Willie;
Wi' gratefu' heart I thank you brawlie;
Tho' I maun say 't, I wad be silly,
And unco vain,
Should I believe, my coaxin billie,
Your flatterin' strain.

* Lapraik published his poems in 1788, but they had no success. Burns was his only admirer.

† "Simson:" parish teacher in Cumnock; a rhymer, and a man of considerable talent. He had got a copy of the "Twa Herds."

But I 'se believe ye kindly meant it:
I sud be laith to think ye hinted
Ironic satire, sidelins sklented
On my poor musie;
Tho' in sic phraisin terms ye 've penn'd it,
I scarce excuse ye.

My senses wad be in a creel,
Should I but dare a hope to speel,
Wi' Allan, or wi' Gilbertfield,*
The braes o' fame;
Or Fergusson, the writer-chiel,
A deathless name.

(O Fergusson! thy glorious parts
Ill suited law's dry, musty arts!
My curse upon your whunstane hearts,
Ye E'nbrugh gentry!
The tythe o' what ye waste at cartes
Wad stow'd his pantry!)

Yet when a tale comes i' my head,
Or lasses gie my heart a screed,
As whiles they're like to be my dead,
(O sad disease!)
I kittle up my rustic reed;
It gies me ease.

Auld Coila, now, may fidge fu' fain,
She's gotten poets o' her ain;
Chiels wha their chanters winna hain,
But tune their lays,
Till echoes a' resound again
Her weel-sung praise.

Nae poet thought her worth his while,
To set her name in measur'd style;
She lay like some unkenn'd-of isle
Beside New Holland,
Or whare wild-meeting oceans boil
Besouth Magellan.

Ramsay an' famous Fergusson
Gied Forth an' Tay a lift aboon;
Yarrow an' Tweed, to monie a tune,
Owre Scotland rings;
While Irwin, Lugar, Ayr, an' Doon
Nae body sings.

Th' Illissus, Tiber, Thames, an' Seine,
Glide sweet in monie a tunefu' line:
But, Willie, set your fit to mine,
An' cock your crest;
We'll gar our streams an' burnies shine
Up wi' the best!

We'll sing auld Coila's plains an' fells,
Her moors red-brown wi' heather bells,
Her banks an' braes, her dens an' dells,
Whare glorious Wallace
Aft bure the gree, as story tells,
Frae Suthron billies.

At Wallace' name what Scottish blood
But boils up in a spring-tide flood!
Oft have our fearless fathers strode
By Wallace' side,
Still pressing onward, red-wat-shod,
Or glorious dy'd!

*Gilbertfield:" Wm. Hamilton, a poet contemporary with Allan Ramsay.

O sweet are Coila's haughs an' woods,
When lintwhites chant amang the buds,
And jinkin hares, in amorous whids,
Their loves enjoy;
While thro' the braes the cushat croods
With wailfu' cry!

Ev'n winter bleak has charms to me,
When winds rave thro' the naked tree;
Or frosts on hills of Ochiltree
Are hoary gray;
Or blinding drifts wild-furious flee,
Dark'ning the day!

O Nature! a' thy shews an' forms
To feeling, pensive hearts hae charms!
Whether the summer kindly warms,
Wi' life an' light;
Or winter howls, in gusty storms,
The lang, dark night!

The muse, nae poet ever fand her,
Till by himsel' he learn'd to wander,
Adown some trottin burn's meander,
An' no think lang:
O sweet to stray, an' pensive ponder
A heart-felt sang!

The warly race may drudge an' drive,
Hog-shouther, jundie, stretch, an' strive;
Let me fair Nature's face descrive,
And I, wi' pleasure,
Shall let the busy, grumbling hive
Bum owre their treasure.

Fareweel, "my rhyme-composing" brither!
We 've been owre lang unkenn'd to ither:
Now let us lay our heads thegither,
In love fraternal:
May envy wallop in a tether,
Black fiend, infernal!

While Highlandmen hate tolls an' taxes;
While moorlan' herds like guid, fat braxies;
While terra firma, on her axis,
Diurnal turns;
Count on a friend, in faith an' practice,
In Robert Burns.

POSTSCRIPT.

My memory 's no worth a preen;
I had amaist forgotten clean,
Ye bade me write you what they mean
By this New-Light,*
'Bout which our herds sae aft hae been
Maist like to fight.

In days when mankind were but callans
At grammar, logic, an' sic talents,
They took nae pains their speech to balance,
Or rules to gie;
But spak their thoughts in plain, braid Lallans,
Like you or me.

In thae auld times, they thought the moon,
Just like a sark or pair o' shoon,
Wore by degrees, till her last roon
Gaed past their viewin';
And shortly after she was done
They gat a new ane.

This past for certain, undisputed;
It ne'er cam i' their heads to doubt it,
Till chiels gat up an' wad confute it,
And ca'd it wrang;
And muckle din there was about it,
Baith loud and lang.

Some herds, well learn'd upo' the beuk,
Wad threap auld folk the thing misteuk;
For 'twas the auld moon turn'd a neuk,
An' out o' sight,
An' backlins-comin' to the leuk,
She grew mair bright.

This was denied—it was affirm'd;
The herds an' hirsels were alarm'd:
The reverend gray-beards rav'd an' storm'd
That beardless laddies
Should think they better were inform'd
Than their auld daddies.

Frae less to mair it gaed to sticks;
Frae words an' aiths to clours an' nicks;
And monie a fallow gat his licks,
Wi' hearty crunt;
And some, to learn them for their tricks,
Were hang'd an' brunt.

This game was play'd in mony lands,
And Auld-Light caddies bure sic hands,
That, faith! the youngsters took the sands
Wi' nimble shanks,
Till lairds forbade, by strict commands,
Sic bluidy pranks.

But New-Light herds gat sic a cowe,
Folk thought them ruin'd stick-an'-stowe,
Till now amaist on every knowe
Ye 'll find ane placed;
An' some their New-Light fair avow,
Just quite barefaced.

* *New-Light* is a cant phrase in the West of Scotland for those religious opinions which Dr. Taylor of Norwich has defended so strenuously.—(B.)

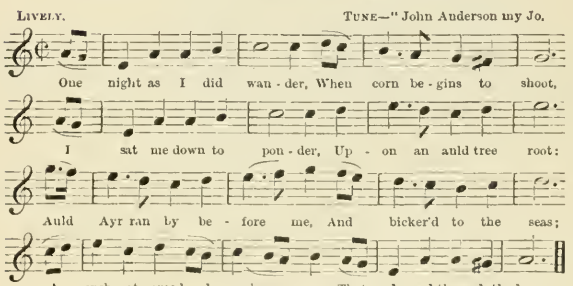
Nae doubt the Auld-Light flocks are bleatin';
Their zealous herds are vex'd an' sweatin';
Mysel' I 've even seen them greetin'
Wi' girnin' spite,
To hear the moon sae sadly lied on
By word an' write.

But shortly they will cowe the louns!
Some Auld-Light herds in neibour touns
Are mind't, in things they ca' balloons,
To tak a flight,
And stay a month amang the moons,
An' see them right.

Guid observation they will gie them;
And when the auld moon 's gaun to lea'e them,
The hindmost shaird, they 'll fetch it wi' them,
Just i' their pouch,
An' when the New-Light billies see them,
I think they 'll crouch!

Sae, ye observe that a' this clatter
Is naething but a "moonshine matter;"
But though dull prose-folk Latin splatter
In logic tulzie,
I hope, we bardies ken some better
Than mind sic brulzie.

ONE NIGHT AS I DID WANDER.


Lively.
Tune—"John Anderson my Jo.
One night as I did wan - der, When corn be - gins to shoot,
I sat me down to pon - der, Up - on an auld tree root:
Auld Ayr ran by be - fore me, And bicker'd to the seas;
A cush - at trood - ed o'er me, That ech - oed through the braes.

FRAGMENT OF SONG.

Slow.
Tho' cru - el fate should bid us part, Far as the pole and line,
Her dear i - de - a round my heart, Should ten-der - ly en - twine.
Tho' mountains rise and de - serts howl, And oceans roar be - tween;
Yet, dear - er than my deathless soul, I still would love my Jean.

RANTIN', ROVIN' ROBIN.*

Lively.
Tune—"Dainty Davie."
There was a lad was born in Kyle, But what - na day o' what - na style,
I doubt its hardly worth the while To be sae nice wi' Ro - bin.
Chorus—Rob-in was a ro - vin' boy, Ran-tin', ro - vin', ran - tin', ro - vin,'
Ro - bin was a ro - vin' boy, Ran - tin', ro - vin' Ro - bin.

Our monarch's hindmost year but ane
Was five-and-twenty days begun,
'Twas then a blast o' Janwar' win'
Blew hansel in on Robin.
Robin was, &c.

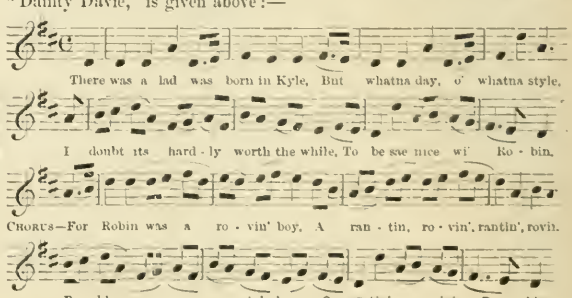
The gossip keekit in his loof,
Quo' scho, "Wha lives will see the proof,
This waly boy will be nae coof;
I think we 'll ca' him Robin."
Robin was, &c.

"He 'll hae misfortunes great and sma',
But aye a heart aboon them a';
He 'll be a credit till us a'—
We 'll a' be proud o' Robin."
Robin was, &c.

"But sure as three times three mak nine,
I see by ilka score and line,
This chap will dearly like our kin',
So leeze me on thee, Robin!"
Robin was, &c.

"Guid faith, quo' scho, I doubt you 'll gar
The bonnie lasses lie aspar;
But twenty fauts ye may hae waur—
So blessin's on thee, Robin!"
Robin was, &c.

* The following tune, "O Gin ye were Dead, Gudeman," is the modern adaptation to the words of "Rantin', Rovin' Robin:" but as it necessitates general alterations in the words, the original tune, "Dainty Davie," is given above:—


There was a lad was born in Kyle, But whatna day, o' whatna style,
I doubt its hard - ly worth the while, To be sae nice wi' Ro - bin.
Chorus—For Robin was a ro - vin' boy, A ran - tin, ro - vin', rantin', rovin.
Ro - bin was a ro - vin' boy; O ran-tin', ro - vin' Ro - bin.

ELEGY

ON THE DEATH OF ROBERT RUISSEAUX.*

Now Robin lies in his last lair,
He'll gabble rhyme, nor sing nae mair;
Cauld poverty, wi' hungry stare,
Nae mair shall fear him;
Nor anxious fear, nor cankert care,
E'er mair come near him.

To tell the truth, they seldom fash'd him,
Except the moment that they crush'd him;
For soon as chance or fate had hush'd 'em,
Though e'er sae short,
Then wi' a rhyme or sang he lash'd 'em,
And thought it sport.

Though he was bred to kintra wark,
And counted was baith wight and stark,
Yet that was never Robin's mark
To mak a man;
But tell him he was learn'd and clark,
Ye roosed him then!

LETTER TO JOHN GOUDIE, KILMARNOCK,†

ON THE PUBLICATION OF HIS ESSAYS.

O GOUDIE! terror o' the Whigs,
Dread o' black coats and reverend wigs,
Sour Bigotry, on her last legs,
Girnin', looks back,
Wishin' the ten Egyptian plagues
Wad seize you quick.

Poor gapin', glowrin' Superstition,
Waes me, she's in a sad condition;
Fie! bring Black Jock,‡ her state physician,
To see her water;
Alas! there 's ground o' great suspicion
She 'll ne'er get better.

Auld Orthodoxy lang did grapple,
But now she's got an unco ripple;
Haste, gie her name up i' the chapel,
Nigh unto death;
See how she fetches at the thrapple,
And gasps for breath!

Enthusiasm 's past redemption,
Gane in a gallopin' consumption,
Not a' the quacks, wi' a' their gumption,
Can ever mend her,
Her feeble pulse gie's strong presumption
Death soon will end her.

'Tis you and Taylor § are the chief
Wha are to blame for this mischief;
But gin the L—d's ain folks gat leave,
A toom tar barrel
And twa red peats wad send relief,
And end the quarrel.

For me, my skill 's but very sma',
An' skill in prose I 've nane ava';
But quietlenswise, between us twa,
Weel may ye speed!
And tho' they sud you sair misca',
Ne'er fash your head.

E'en swinge the dogs, and thresh them sicker!
The mair they squeel aye chap the thicker;
And still 'mang hands a hearty bicker
O' something stout;
It gars an owthor's pulse beat quicker,
And helps his wit.

There 's naething like the honest nappy;
Whare 'll ye e'er see men sae happy,
Or women sonsie, saft and sappy,
'Tween morn and morn,
As them wha like to taste the drappie,
In glass or horn?

I 've seen me daez't upon a time,
I scarce could wink or see a styme;
Just ae hauf-mutchkin' does me prime,
(Ought less is little,)
Then back I rattle on the rhyme,
As gleg 's a whittle.

THIRD EPISTLE TO J. LAPRAIK.

SEPTEMBER 13, 1785.

GUID speed and furder to you, Johnnie,
Guid health, hale han's, and weather bonnie;
Now when ye're nickin down fu' canny
The staff o' bread,
May ye ne'er want a stoup o' bran'y
To clear your head!

* "Ruisseaux:" a play upon his own name, meaning in French, *burns*.
† See LIFE.
‡ "Black Jock:" see LIFE.
§ "Taylor:" Dr. Taylor of Norwich

May Boreas never thrash your rigs,
Nor kick your rickles aff their legs,
Sendin' the stuff o'er muirs and haggs,
Like drivin' wrack ;
But may the tapmost grain that wags
Come to the sack !

I'm bizzie, too, and skelpin' at it,
But bitter, daudin' showers hae wat it ;
Sae my auld stumpie pen I gat it,
Wi' muckle wark,
And took my jocteleg* and whatt it,
Like ony clark.

It 's now twa month that I 'm your debtor
For your braw, nameless, dateless letter,
Abusin' me for harsh ill-nature
On holy men,
While deil a hair yoursel' ye 're better,
But mair profane.

But let the kirk-folk ring their bells,
Let 's sing about our noble sel's :
We 'll cry nae jauds frae heathen hills
To help, or roose us ;
But browster wives and whisky stills,
They are the Muses.

Your friendship, sir, I winna quat it,
And, if ye mak objections at it,
Then han' in nieve some day we 'll knot it,
And witness take,
And when wi' usquebae we 've wat it,
It winna break.

But if the beast and branks be spared
Till kye be gaun without the herd,
And a' the vittel in the yard,
An' theekit right,
I mean your ingle-side to guard
Ae winter night.

Then muse-inspirin' aqua-vitæ
Shall make us baith sae blythe and witty,
Till ye forget ye 're auld and gatty,
And be as canty
As ye were nine year less than thretty,
Sweet ane an' twenty !

But stooks are coupit wi' the blast,
And now the sin keeks in the west,
Then I maun rin amang the rest,
And quat my chanter ;
Sae I subscribe mysel' in haste,
Yours, RAB THE RANTER.

* "Jocteleg:" from *Jacque de Liege*, the name of a French cutler.

TO THE REVEREND JOHN M'MATH,†

INCLOSING A COPY OF "HOLY WILLIE'S PRAYER," WHICH HE HAD REQUESTED, SEPT. 17, 1785.

WHILE at the stook the shearers cower
To shun the bitter blaudin' shower ;
Or in gulravage rinnin' scowr,
To pass the time,
To you I dedicate the hour
In idle rhyme.

My Musie, tired wi' mony a sonnet,
On gown, and ban', and douse black bonnet,
Is grown right eerie now she 's done it,
Lest they should blame her,
And rouse their holy thunder on it,
And anathem her.

I own 'twas rash, and rather hardy,
That I, a simple, kintra bardie,
Should meddle wi' a pack sae sturdy,
Wha, if they ken me,
Can easy, wi' a single wordie,
Louse hell upon me.

But I gae mad at their grimaces,
Their sighin', cantin', grace-proud faces,
Their three-mile prayers, and hauf-mile graces,
Their raxin' conscience,
Whase greed, revenge, and pride disgraces
Waur nor their nonsense.

There 's Gawn,‡ misca't waur than a beast,
Wha has mair honour in his breast
Than mony scores as guid 's the priest
Wha sae abused him ;
And may a bard no crack his jest
What way they 've used him ?

See him, the poor man's friend in need,
The gentleman in word and deed ;
And shall his fame and honour bleed
By worthless skellums,
And not a muse erect her head
To cowe the blellums ?

O Pope ! had I thy satire's darts,
To gie the rascals their deserts,
I 'd rip their rotten, hollow hearts,
And tell aloud
Their jugglin', hocus-pocus arts,
To cheat the crowd.

† "Rev. John M'Math :" assistant to the Rev. Peter Woodrow of Tarbolton. He fell into dissipated habits, and died at Rossal in the Isle of Mull. The harvest of 1785 was a bad one, to which there is allusion above.

‡ "Gawn :" Gavin Hamilton, Esq.

God knows, I 'm no the thing I should be,
Nor am I even the thing I could be ;
But twenty times I rather would be
An atheist clean,
Than under gospel colours hid be,
Just for a screen.

An honest man may like a glass,
An honest man may like a lass,
But mean revenge and malice fause
He 'll still disdain,
And then cry zeal for gospel laws,
Like some we ken.

They take religion in their mouth ;
They talk o' mercy, grace, an' truth ;
For what ?—to gie their malice skouth
On some puir wight,
And hunt him down, o'er right and ruth,
To ruin straight.

All hail, Religion ! maid divine !
Pardon a muse sae mean as mine,
Who in her rough imperfect line
Thus daurs to name thee ;
To stigmatise false friends of thine,
Can ne'er defame thee.

Though blotch't and foul wi' mony a stain,
And far unworthy of thy train,
With trembling voice I tune my strain
To join with those
Who boldly dare thy cause maintain
In spite of foes :

In spite o' crowds, in spite o' mobs,
In spite of undermining jobs,
In spite of dark banditti stabs
At worth and merit,
By scoundrels, even wi' holy robes,
But hellish spirit.

O Ayr ! my dear, my native ground !
Within thy presbyterial bound
A candid, liberal band is found
Of public teachers,
As men, as Christians too, renown'd,
And manly preachers.

Sir, in that circle you are named ;
Sir, in that circle you are famed ;
And some, by whom your doctrine 's blamed,
(Which gies you honour)
Even, sir, by them your heart 's esteemed,
And winning manner.

Pardon this freedom I have ta'en,
And if impertinent I 've been,
Impute it not, good sir, in ane
Whase heart ne'er wrang'd ye,
But to his utmost would befriend
Ought that belang'd ye.

SECOND EPISTLE TO DAVIE, A BROTHER POET.*

Auld Neibour,

I 'm three times doubly owre your debtor
For your auld-farrant, frien'ly letter ;
Though I maun say 't, I doubt ye flatter.
Ye speak sae fair ;
For my puir, silly, rhymin' clatter
Some less maun sair.

Hale be your heart, hale be your fiddle ;
Lang may your elbuck jink and diddle,
To cheer you through the weary widdle
O' war'ly cares,
Till bairns' bairns kindly cuddle
Your auld gray hairs.

But, Davie lad, I 'm rede ye 're glaikit ;
I 'm tauld the Muse ye hae negleckit ;
And gif it 's sae, ye sud be licket
Until ye fyke ;
Sic hauns as you sud ne'er be faiket,*
Be hain't wha like.

For me, I 'm on Parnassus' brink,
Rivin' the words to gar them clink ;
Whyles daez't wi' love, whyles daez't wi' drink,
Wi' jauds or masons ;
And whyles, but aye owre late, I think
Braw sober lessons.

Of a' the thoughtless sons o' man,
Commen' me to the bardie clan ;
Except it be some idle plan
O' rhymin' clink,
The devil-hae't, that I sud ban,
They ever think.

Nae thought, nae view, nae scheme o' livin',
Nae cares to gie us joy or grievin' :
But just the pouchie put the nieve in,
And while ought 's there,
Then, hiltie skiltie, we gae scrievin',
And fash nae mair.

* "Brother poet:" this was prefixed to the poems of David Sillar, published at Kilmarnock, 1789.

† "Faiket." folded.

Leeze me on rhyme! it 's aye a treasure,
My chief, amaist my only pleasure;
At hame, a-fiel', at wark, or leisure,
The muse, poor hizzie!
Though rough an' raploch be her measure
She 's seldom lazy.

Haud to the muse, my dainty Davie:
The warl' may play you mony a shavie;
But for the muse, she 'll never leave ye,
Though e'er sae puir,
Na, even though limpin' wi' the spavie
Frae door to door.

THE CATRINE WOODS WERE YELLOW SEEN.

The Catrine woods were yel - low seen, The flowers de - cay'd on
Cat - rine lee, Nae lav'rock sang on hil - lock green, But na - ture
sicken'd on the e'e, Thro' fad - ed groves Ma - ri - a* sang, Her-
sel' In beau - ty's bloom the while; And aye the wild - wood
ech - - oes rang, Fare - weel the braes o' Bal - loch - myle.

* "Maria:" eldest daughter of Sir John Whitefoord of Ballochmyle, who, owing to misfortunes connected with the Ayr Bank, had to sell his estate of Ballochmyle.

Low in your wintry beds, ye flowers,
Again ye 'll flourish fresh and fair;
Ye birdies dumb, in with'ring bowers,
Again ye 'll charm the vocal air.

But here, alas! for me nae mair
Shall birdie charm, or floweret smile;
Farewell the bonnie banks of Ayr,
Farewell, farewell, sweet Ballochmyle!

YOUNG PEGGY BLOOMS.*

ANDANTE.
TUNE—"Loch Eroch Side."
Young Peg - gy blooms our bonniest lass, Her blush is like the morning,
The ro - sy dawn, the springing grass, With ear - ly gems a - dorn - ing.
Her eyes outshine the ra - diant beams That gild the pass - ing shower,
And glit - ter o'er the crystal streams, And cheer each fresh'ning flow - er.

Her lips, more than the cherries bright,
A richer dye has graced them;
They charm th' admiring gazer's sight,
And sweetly tempt to taste them;
Her smile is as the evening mild,
When feather'd pairs are courting,
And little lambkins wanton wild,
In playful bands disporting.

Were Fortune lovely Peggy's foe,
Such sweetness would relent her;
As blooming spring unbends the brow
Of surly, savage winter.
Detraction's eye no aim can gain,
Her winning powers to lessen;
And fretful envy grins in vain
The poison'd tooth to fasten.

Ye Powers of honour, love, and truth,
From every ill defend her:
Inspire the highly-favour'd youth
The Destinies intend her:
Still fan the sweet connubial flame
Responsive in each bosom;
And bless the dear parental name
With many a filial blossom.

* Daughter of a Carrick laird, and relative of Mrs. Gavin Hamilton. Was unfortunate in her after life. See "Banks and Braes o' Bonny Doon."

POWERS CELESTIAL! WHOSE PROTECTION.

TUNE—"Blue Bonnets."
Powers ce - les - tial, whose pro - tec - tion, e - ver guards
the vir - tuous fair, While in dis - tant climes I wand - er,
Let my Ma - ry† be your care: Let her form, sae fair and
faultless, Fair and fault - less as your own; Let my Ma - ry's
kin - dred spi - rit, Draw your choic - est influence down.

Make the gales you waft around her,
Soft and peaceful as her breast;
Breathing in the breeze that fans her,
Soothe her bosom into rest:
Guardian angels! O protect her
When in distant lands I roam;
To realms unknown while Fate exiles me,
Make her bosom still my home.

HER FLOWING LOCKS.‡

HER flowing locks, the raven's wing,
Adown her neck and bosom hing;
How sweet unto that breast to cling,
And round that neck entwine her!
Her lips are roses wat wi' dew,
O, what a feast her bonnie mou'!
Her cheeks a mair celestial hue,
A crimson still diviner.

† "Mary:" written on Mary Campbell, at the time Burns was preparing to go abroad.

‡ "Her flowing locks:" an impromptu composed at Mauchline on seeing a beautiful young lady on horseback—probably Miss Whitefoord.

HALLOWE'EN.*

"Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
The simple pleasures of the lowly train;
To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
One native charm, than all the gloss of art."
GOLDSMITH.

The following poem will, by many readers, be well enough understood; but for the sake of those who are unacquainted with the manners and traditions of the country where the scene is cast, notes are added, to give some account of the principal charms and spells of that night, so big with prophecy to the peasantry in the west of Scotland. The passion of prying into futurity makes a striking part of the history of human nature in its rude state, in all ages and nations; and it may be some entertainment to a philosophical mind, if any such should honour the author with the perusal, to see the remains of it among the more enlightened in our own.—(B.)

UPON that night, when fairies light
On Cassilis Downans † dance,
Or owre the lays, in splendid blaze,
On sprightly coursers prance;
Or for Colean the route is ta'en,
Beneath the moon's pale beams;
There, up the Cove,‡ to stray an' rove,
Amang the rocks and streams
To sport that night:

Amang the bonnie winding banks,
Where Doon rins, wimplin, clear;
Where Bruce § ance ruled the martial ranks,
An' shook his Carrick spear:
Some merry, friendly, country-folks
Together did convene,
To burn their nits, an' pu' their stocks,
An' haud their Halloween
Fu' blythe that night.

The lasses feat, an' cleanly neat,
Mair braw than when they're fine;
Their faces blythe fu' sweetly kythe
Hearts leal, an' warm, an' kin':
The lads sae trig, wi' wooer-babs
Weel-knotted on their garten;
Some unco blate, an' some wi' gabs
Gar lasses' hearts gang startin'
Whyles fast at night.

Then, first an' foremost, thro the kail,
Their "stocks"‖ maun a' be sought ance;
They steek their een, an' grape an' wale
For muckle anes, an' straught anes.
Poor hav'rel Will fell aff the drift,
An' wandered thro' the "bow-kail,"
An' pu't, for want o' better shift,
A runt, was like a sow-tail
Sae bow't that night.

Then, straught or crooked, yird or nane,
They roar an' ery a' throw'ther;
The vera wee-things, toddlin, rin,
Wi' stocks out owre their shouther:
An' gif the custoc 's sweet or sour,
Wi' joctelegs they taste them;
Syne coziely, aboon the door,
Wi' cannie care they've plac'd them,
To lie that night.

The lasses staw frae 'mang them a',
To pu' their stalks o' corn;¶
But Rab slips out, an' jinks about,
Behint the muckle thorn;
He grippet Nelly hard an' fast;
Loud skirl'd a' the lasses;
But her tap-pickle maist was lost,
Whan kiutlin in the "fause-house"**
Wi' him that night.

The auld guid-wife's weel-hoordet nits ††
Are round an' round divided,
An' mony lads an' lasses' fates
Are there that night decided:
Some kindle couthie, side by side,
An' burn thegither trimly;
Some start awa wi' saucy pride,
An' jump out owre the chimlie
Fu' high that night.

* "Hallowe'en:" is thought to be a night when witches, devils, and other mischief-making beings, are all abroad on their baneful midnight errands; particularly those aerial people, the Fairies, are said on that night to hold a grand anniversary.—(B.)

† "Cassilis Downans:" certain little, romantic, rocky, green hills, in the neighbourhood of the ancient seat of the Earls of Cassilis.

‡ "Cove:" a noted cavern near Colzean-house, called the Cove of Colzean; which, as well as Cassilis Downans, is famed in country story for being a favourite haunt of fairies.—(B.)

§ "Bruce:" the famous family of that name, the ancestors of Robert, the great deliverer of his country, were Earls of Carrick.—(B.)

‖ "Stocks:" the first ceremony of Hallowe'en is pulling each a *stock*, or plant of kail. They must go out, hand in hand, with eyes shut, and pull the first they meet with: its being big or little, straight or crooked, is prophetic of the size and shape of the grand object of all their spells—the husband or wife. If any *yird*, or earth, stick to the root, that is *tocher*, or fortune; and the state of the *custoc*, that is, the heart of the stem, is indicative of the natural temper and disposition. Lastly, the stems, or to give them their ordinary appellation, the *runts*, are placed somewhere above the head of the door; and the Christian names of the people whom chance brings into the house are, according to the priority of placing the *runts*, the names in question.—(B.)

¶ "Stalks o' corn:" they go to the barnyard and pull each, at three several times, a stalk of oats. If the third stalk wants the *top-pickle*, that is, the grain at the top of the stalk, the party in question will come to the marriage-bed anything but a maid.—(B.)

** "Fause-house:" when the corn is in a doubtful state, by being too green or wet, the stack-builder, by means of old timber, &c., makes a large apartment in his stack, with an opening in the side which is fairest exposed to the wind: this he calls a *fause-house*.—(B.)

†† "Nits:" burning the nuts is a favourite charm. They name the lad and lass to each particular nut, as they lay them in the fire, and accordingly as they burn quietly together, or start from beside one another, the course and issue of the courtship will be.—(B.)

Jean slips in twa, wi' tentie e'e;
  Wha 'twas she wadna tell;
But this is Jock, an' this is me,
  She says in to hersel:
He bleez'd owre her, an' she owre him,
  As they wad never mair part;
Till fuff! he started up the lum,
  And Jean had e'en a sair heart
    To see't that night.

Poor Willie, wi' his bow-kail runt,
  Was brunt wi' primsie Mallie;
An' Mary, nae doubt, took the drunt,
  To be compar'd to Willie:
Mall's nit lap out wi' pridefu' fling,
  An' her ain fit it brunt it;
While Willie lap, an' swoor by "jing,"
  'Twas just the way he wanted
    To be that night.

Nell had the "fause-house" in her min',
  She pits hersel' an' Rob in;
In loving bleeze they sweetly join,
  Till white in ase they're sobbin':
Nell's heart was dancin' at the view:
  She whisper'd Rob to leuk for't:
Rob, stowlins, prie'd her bonnie mou,
  Fu' cozie in the neuk for't,
    Unseen that night.

But Merran sat behint their backs,
  Her thoughts on Andrew Bell;
She lea'es them gashin at their cracks.
  An' slips out-by hersel':
She thro' the yard the nearest taks.
  An' for the kiln she goes then,
An' darklins grapit for the "bauks,"
  And in the "blue-clue"* throws then,
    Right fear't that night.

* "Blue-clue:" whoever would, with success, try this spell, must strictly observe these directions:—Steal out, all alone, to the kiln, and, darkling, throw into the pot a clue of blue yarn; wind it in a new clue off the old one; and, towards the latter end, something will hold the thread; demand, Wha hauds? *i.e.*, who holds? An answer will be returned from the kiln-pot, by naming the Christian and surname of your future spouse.—(B.)

An' aye she win't, an' aye she swat—
I wat she made nae jaukin';
Till something held within the pat,
Guid L—d! but she was quaukin'!
But whether 'twas the deil himsel',
Or whether 'twas a bauk-en',
Or whether it was Andrew Bell,
She did na wait on talkin'
To spier that night.

Wee Jenny to her grannie says,
"Will ye go wi' me, grannie?
I 'll eat the apple* at the glass,
I gat frae uncle Johnnie:"
She fuff't her pipe wi' sic a lunt,
In wrath she was sae vap'rin',
She notic't na an aizle brunt
Her braw, new, worset apron
Out thro' that night.

"Ye little skelpie-limmer's-face!
I daur you try sic sportin'
As seek the foul thief ony place,
For him to spae your fortune:
Nae doubt but ye may get a sight!
Great cause ye hae to fear it;
For mony a ane has gotten a fright,
An' liv'd an' died deleerit,
On sic a night.

"Ae hairst afore the Sherra-moor,
I mind 't as weel's yestreen—
I was a gilpey then, I'm sure
I was na past fyfteen:
The simmer had been cauld an' wat,
An' stuff was unco green;
An' ay a rantin' kirn we gat,
An' just on Hallowe'en
It fell that night.

"Our 'stibble-rig'† was Rab M'Graen,
A clever, sturdy fallow;
His sin gat Eppie Sim wi' wean,
That liv'd in Achmacalla:
He gat hemp-seed,‡ I mind it weel,
An' he made unco light o't;

But mony a day was by himsel',
He was sae sairly frighted
That vera night."

Then up gat fechtin' Jamie Fleck,
An' he swoor by his conscience,
That he could saw hemp-seed a peck;
For it was a' but nonsense:
The auld guidman raught down the pock,
An' out a handfu' gied him;
Syne bad him slip frae 'mang the folk,
Sometime when nae ane see'd him,
An' try't that night.

He marches thro' amang the stacks,
Tho' he was something sturtin';
The graip he for a harrow taks,
An' haurls at his curpin:
And ev'ry now an' then he says,
"Hemp-seed I saw thee,
An' her that is to be my lass
Come after me, an' draw thee
As fast this night."

He whistl'd up "Lord Lennox' March,"
To keep his courage cheery;
Altho' his hair began to arch,
He was sae fley'd an' eerie:
Till presently he hears a squeak,
An' then a grane an' gruntle;
He by his shouther gae a keek,
An' tumbled wi' a wintle
Out-owre that night.

He roar'd a horrid murder-shout,
In dreadfu' desperation!
An' young an' auld come rinnin out,
An' hear the said narration:
He swoor 'twas hilchin Jean M'Craw,
Or crouchie Merran Humphie—
Till stop! she trotted thro' them a';
An' wha was it but grumphie
Asteer that night?

Meg fain wad to the barn gaen,
To winn three wechts o' naething;§
But for to meet the deil her lane,
She pat but little faith in:

* "Eat the apple:" take a candle, and go alone to a looking-glass; eat an apple before it, and some traditions say, you should comb your hair all the time; the face of your conjugal companion, to be, will be seen in the glass, as if peeping over your shoulder.—(B.)

† "Stibble-rig:" leader of the reapers.

‡ "Hemp-seed:" steal out, unperceived, and sow a handful of hemp-seed, harrowing it with anything you can conveniently draw after you. Repeat now and then, "Hemp-seed, I saw thee; hemp-seed, I saw thee; and him (or her) that is to be my true-love, come after me and pu' thee." Look over your left shoulder, and you will see the appearance of the person invoked, in the attitude of pulling hemp. Some traditions say, "Come after me and shaw thee," that is, show thyself: in which case it simply appears. Others omit the harrowing, and say, "Come after me, and harrow thee."

§ "Win three wechts o' naething:" this charm must likewise be performed unperceived, and alone. You go to the barn, and open both doors, taking them off the hinges, if possible; for there is danger that the being about to appear may shut the doors, and do you some mischief. Then take that instrument used in winnowing the corn, which, in our country dialect, we call a *wecht;* and go through all the attitudes of letting down corn against the wind. Repeat it three times; and the third time an apparition will pass through the barn, in at the windy door, and out at the other, having both the figure in question, and the appearance or retinue marking the employment or station in life.—(B.)

She gies the herd a pickle nits,
An' twa red-cheekit apples,
To watch, while for the barn she sets,
In hopes to see Tam Kipples
That vera night.

She turns the key wi' cannie thraw,
An' owre the threshold ventures;
But first on Sawnie gies a ca',
Syne bauldly in she enters:
A ratton rattl'd up the wa',
An' she cried, L—d preserve her!
An' ran thro' midden-hole an' a',
An' pray'd wi' zeal and fervour,
Fu' fast that night.

They hoy't out Will, wi' sair advice;
They hecht him some fine braw ane;
It chanc'd the stack he faddom'd thrice,*
Was timmer-propt for thrawin':
He taks a swirlie auld moss-oak
For some black, grousome carlin;
An' loot a winze, an' drew a stroke,
Till skin in blypes cam haurlin'
Aff 's nieves that night.

A wanton widow Leezie was,
As cantie as a kittlen;
But och! that night, amang the shaws,
She gat a fearfu' settlin'!
She thro' the whins, an' by the cairn,
An' owre the hill gaed scrievin',

* "Faddom'd thrice:" take an opportunity of going unnoticed to a bear-stack, and fathom it three times round. The last fathom of the last time, you will catch in your arms the appearance of your future conjugal yoke-fellow.—(B.)

Whare three lairds' lan's met at a burn,*
To dip her left sark-sleeve in,
Was bent that night.

Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,
As thro' the glen it wimpl't;
Whyles round a rocky scaur it strays,
Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't;
Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,
Wi' bickerin', dancin' dazzle;
Whyles cookit underneath the braes,
Below the spreading hazle,
Unseen that night.

Amang the brachens, on the brae,
Between her an' the moon,
The deil, or else an outler quey,
Gat up an' ga'e a croon:
Poor Leezie's heart maist lap the hool;
Near lav'rock-height she jumpit,
But mist a fit, an' in the pool
Out-owre the lugs she plumpit
Wi' a plunge that night.

In order, on the clean hearth-stane,
The "luggies"† three are ranged;
An' ev'ry time great care is ta'en
To see them duly changed:
Auld uncle John, wha wedlock's joys
Sin' "Mar's year"‡ did desire,
Because he gat the toom dish thrice
He heav'd them on the fire,
In wrath that night.

Wi' merry sangs, an' friendly cracks,
I wat they did na weary;
An' unco tales, an' funnie jokes—
Their sports were cheap an' cheery:
Till butter'd sow'ns,§ wi' fragrant lunt,
Set a' their gabs a steerin';
Syne, wi' a social glass o' strunt,
They parted aff careerin'
Fu' blythe that night.

* "Met at a burn:" you go out, one or more, for this is a social spell, to a south running spring or rivulet, where "three lairds' lands meet," and dip your left shirt sleeve. Go to bed in sight of a fire, and hang your wet sleeve before it to dry. Lie awake; and some time near midnight an apparition, having the exact figure of the grand object in question, will come and turn the sleeve, as if to dry the other side of it.—(B.)

† "Luggies three:" take three dishes; put clean water in one, foul water in another, leave the third empty; blindfold a person, and lead him to the hearth where the dishes are ranged; he (or she) dips the left hand, if by chance in the clean water, the future husband or wife will come to the bar of matrimony a maid; if in the foul, a widow; if in the empty dish, it foretells, with equal certainty, no marriage at all. It is repeated three times, and every time the arrangement of the dishes is altered.—(B.)

‡ "Mar's Year:" 1715, when the Earl of Mar's rebellion took place.

§ "Butter'd sow'ns:" sowens, with butter instead of milk to them, is always the *Hallowe'en supper.*—(B.)

TO A MOUSE,‖

ON TURNING HER UP IN HER NEST WITH THE PLOUGH, NOVEMBER, 1785.

Wee, sleekit, cow'rin', tim'rous beastie,
O, what a panic 's in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,
Wi' bickerin' brattle!
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,
Wi' murderin' pattle!

I 'm truly sorry man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion,
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor earth-born companion,
An' fellow-mortal!

I doubt na, whiles, but thou may thieve;
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!
A daimen icker in a thrave
'S a sma' request;
I 'll get a blessin' wi' the lave,
And never miss 't!

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!
Its silly wa's the win's are strewin'!
And naething, now, to big a new ane
O' foggage green!
And bleak December's winds ensuin',
Baith snell and keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare and waste,
And weary winter comin' fast,
And cozie here, beneath the blast,
Thou thought to dwell,
Till crash! the cruel coulter pass'd
Out through thy cell.

That wee bit heap o' leaves and stibble
Has cost thee mony a weary nibble!
Now thou 's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble,
But house or hald,
To thole the winter's sleety dribble,
And cranreuch cauld!

But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In proving foresight may be vain;
The best laid schemes o' mice an' men,
Gang aft a-gley,
And lea'e us nought but grief and pain,
For promised joy.

‖ Burns composed this while holding the plough in a field near Mossgiel. He had first saved its life from the gadsman, who wanted to kill it.—See LIFE.

Still thou art blest, compared wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But, och! I backward cast my e'e
On prospects drear!
And forward, though I canna see,
I guess an' fear.

HERE LIES JOHNNIE PIGEON.*

HERE lies Johnnie Pigeon;
What was his religion
Whae'er desires to ken,
To some other warl'
Maun follow the carl,
For here Johnnie Pigeon had nane!

Strong ale was ablution,
Small beer persecution,
A dram was *memento mori;*
But a full flowing bowl
Was the saving his soul,
And port was celestial glory.

EPITAPH ON JAMES SMITH.†

LAMENT him, Mauchline husbands a',
He aften did assist ye;
For had ye staid whole weeks awa',
Your wives they ne'er had miss'd ye.

Ye Mauchline bairns, as on ye pass,
To school in bands thegither,
O, tread ye lightly on his grass;
Perhaps he was your faither!

THE JOLLY BEGGARS.‡

RECITATIVO.

WHEN lyart leaves bestrew the yird,
Or wavering like the bauckie-bird, §
Bedim cauld Boreas' blast;
When hailstanes drive wi' bitter skyte,
And infant frosts begin to bite,
In hoary cranreuch dress'd;
Ae night at e'en a merry core
O' randie, gangrel bodies,
In Poosie Nansie's held the splore,
To drink their orra duddies:
Wi' quaffing and laughing,
They ranted and they sang;
Wi' jumping and thumping,
The vera girdle rang.

First, neist the fire, in auld red rags,
Ane sat, weel braced wi' mealy bags,
And knapsack a' in order;
His doxy lay within his arm,
Wi' usquebae and blankets warm—
She blinket on her sodger;
And aye he gies the touzie drab
The tither skelpin' kiss,
While she held up her greedy gab,
Just like an aumous dish.
Ilk smack still did crack still,
Just like a cadger's whip;
Then staggering and swaggering
He roar'd this ditty up—

AIR.

I am a son of Mars, who have been in many wars, And show my cuts
and scars wher - ev - er I come; This here was for a wench, and that
other in a trench, When wel-com - ing the French at the sound of the drum.
My 'prenticeship I past where my leader breathed his last, When the bloody die
was cast on the heights of Abram: ‖ I serv'd out my trade when the gallant game
was play'd, And the Moro ¶ low was laid at the sound of the drum. I
served out my trade when the gallant game was played, I served out my trade when the
gallant game was play'd, And the Moro low was laid at the sound of the drum.

* Host of Whitefoord Arms, Mauchline, where met an odd bachelor's club, of which Burns was a member.

† James Smith, to whom Burns wrote an epistle.—See LIFE.

‡ This Cantata was written in 1785; but not published till after the death of the poet.—See LIFE.

§ Bat.

‖ "The heights of Abram:" the battle-field near Quebec, where General Wolfe fell in the arms of victory, 1759.

¶ "The Moro low was laid:" the capture of Havanah, the capital of the island of Cuba, by the British, in 1762, is here alluded to. Moro was a castle defending its entrance.

I lastly was with Curtis, among the floating batteries,*
And there I left for witness an arm and a limb;
Yet let my country need me, with Elliot † to lead me,
I 'd clatter on my stumps at the sound of a drum.

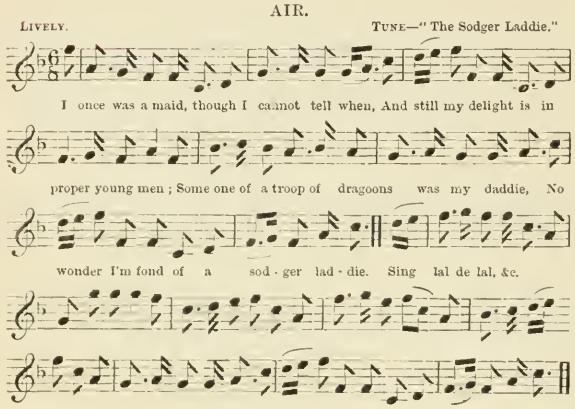
And now though I must beg with a wooden arm and leg,‡
And many a tatter'd rag hanging over my bum,
I 'm as happy with my wallet, my bottle and my callet,
As when I used in scarlet to follow a drum.

What though with hoary locks I must stand the winter shocks,
Beneath the woods and rocks oftentimes for a home,
When the 'tother bag I sell, and the 'tother bottle tell,
I could meet a troop of hell at the sound of the drum.

RECITATIVO.

He ended; and the kebars sheuk
Aboon the chorus roar;
While frighted rattons backward leuk,
And seek the benmost bore;
A fairy fiddler frae the neuk,
He skirl'd out "Encore!"
But up arose the martial chuck,
And laid the loud uproar.

AIR.


LIVELY.
TUNE—"The Sodger Laddie."
I once was a maid, though I cannot tell when, And still my delight is in
proper young men; Some one of a troop of dragoons was my daddie, No
wonder I'm fond of a sod-ger lad-die. Sing lal de lal, &c.

The first of my loves was a swaggering blade,
To rattle the thundering drum was his trade;
His leg was so tight, and his cheek was so ruddy,
Transported I was with my sodger laddie,
Sing, lal de lal, &c.

But the godly old chaplain left him in the lurch,
So the Sword I forsook for the sake of the Church;
He ventured the soul, and I risk'd the body—
'Twas then I proved false to my sodger laddie.
Sing, lal de lal, &c.

* "I lastly was with Curtis, among the floating batteries:" referring to the destruction of the Spanish floating batteries by Captain Curtis, during the famous siege of Gibraltar, 1782.

† "Elliot:" George Augustus Elliot, Lord Heathfield.

‡ This verse is generally omitted when the song is sung.

Full soon I grew sick of the sanctified sot,
The regiment at large for a husband I got;
From the gilded spontoon to the fife I was ready,
I askèd no more but a sodger laddie.
Sing, lal de lal, &c.

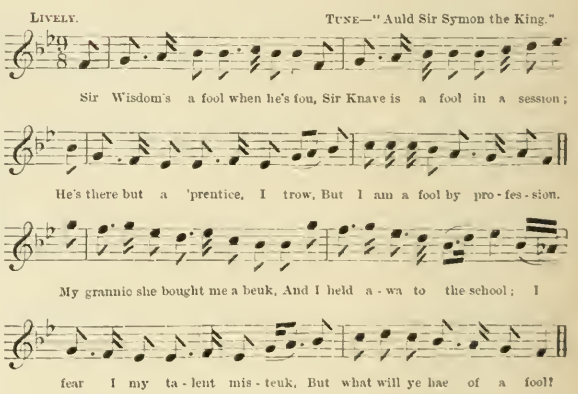
But the peace it reduced me to beg in despair,
Till I met my old boy at a Cunningham fair;
His rags regimental they flutter'd so gaudy,
My heart it rejoiced at my sodger laddie.
Sing, lal de lal, &c.

And now I have lived—I know not how long,
And still I can join in a cup and a song;
But whilst with both hands I can hold the glass steady,
Here 's to thee, my hero, my sodger laddie!
Sing, lal de lal, &c.

RECITATIVO.

Poor Merry Andrew, in the neuk,
Sat guzzling wi' a tinkler hizzie:
They mind't na wha the chorus teuk,
Between themselves they were sae busy.
At length, wi' drink an' courting dizzy,
He stoiter'd up an' made a face;
Then turn'd, an' laid a smack on Grizzy,
Syne tun'd his pipes wi' grave grimace.

AIR.


LIVELY.
TUNE—"Auld Sir Symon the King."
Sir Wisdom's a fool when he's fou, Sir Knave is a fool in a session;
He's there but a 'prentice, I trow, But I am a fool by pro-fes-sion.
My grannie she bought me a beuk, And I held a-wa to the school; I
fear I my ta-lent mis-teuk, But what will ye hae of a fool?

For drink I would venture my neck;
A hizzie 's the half o' my craft;
But what could ye other expect
Of ane that 's avowedly daft?

I ance was tied up like a stirk,
For civilly swearing and quaffing:
I ance was abused i' the kirk,
For towzling a lass i' my daffin'.

Poor Andrew that tumbles for sport
Let naebody name wi' a jeer ;
There 's even, I 'm tauld, i' the court,
A tumbler ca'd the Premier.

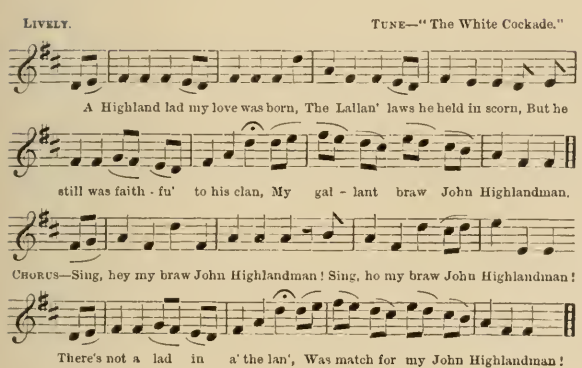
Observed ye yon reverend lad
Mak faces to tickle the mob ?
He rails at our mountebank squad—
It 's rivalship just i' the job.

And now my conclusion I 'll tell,
For faith I 'm confoundedly dry ;
The chiel that 's a fool for himsel',
Gude L—d ! he 's far dafter than I.

RECITATIVO.

Then neist outspak a raucle carlin,
Wha kent fu' weel to cleek the sterlin',
For mony a pursie she had hookit,
An' had in mony a well been doukit ;
Her love had been a Highland laddie,
But weary fa' the waefu' woodie !
Wi' sighs and sobs she thus began
To wail her braw John Highlandman.

AIR.


Lively.
Tune—"The White Cockade."
A Highland lad my love was born, The Lallan' laws he held in scorn, But he
still was faith - fu' to his clan, My gal - lant braw John Highlandman.
Chorus—Sing, hey my braw John Highlandman ! Sing, ho my braw John Highlandman !
There's not a lad in a' the lan', Was match for my John Highlandman !

With his philibeg an' tartan plaid,
An' guid claymore down by his side,
The ladies' hearts he did trepan,
My gallant, braw John Highlandman.
Sing hey, &c.

We rangèd a' from Tweed to Spey,
An' liv'd like lords an' ladies gay ;
For a Lalland face he fearèd none—
My gallant, braw John Highlandman.
Sing hey, &c.

They banish'd him beyond the sea ;
But ere the bud was on the tree,
Adown my cheeks the pearls ran,
Embracing my John Highlandman.
Sing hey, &c.

But, och ! they catch'd him at the last,
And bound him in a dungeon fast :
My curse upon them every one,
They 've hang'd my braw John Highlandman !
Sing hey, &c.

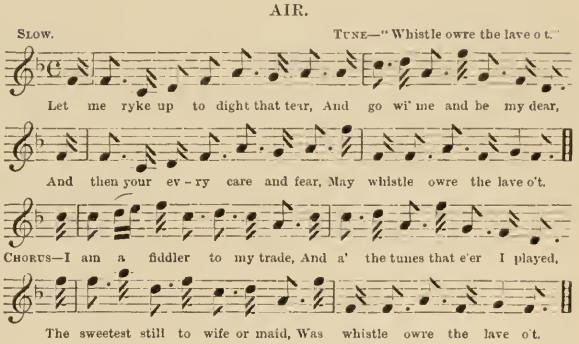
And now a widow, I must mourn
The pleasures that will ne'er return ;
No comfort but a hearty can,
When I think on John Highlandman.
Sing hey, &c.

RECITATIVO.

A pigmy scraper wi' his fiddle,
Wha us'd at trystes an' fairs to driddle,
Her strappin' limb and gausy middle
(He reach'd nae higher)
Had hol'd his heartie like a riddle,
An' blawn't on fire.

Wi' hand on hainch, and upward e'e,
He croon'd his gamut, one, two, three,
Then in an arioso key,
The wee Apollo
Set off wi' allegretto glee
His giga solo.

AIR.


Slow.
Tune—"Whistle owre the lave o't."
Let me ryke up to dight that tear, And go wi' me and be my dear,
And then your ev - ry care and fear, May whistle owre the lave o't.
Chorus—I am a fiddler to my trade, And a' the tunes that e'er I played,
The sweetest still to wife or maid, Was whistle owre the lave o't.

At kirns an' weddin's we'se be there,
An' O sae nicely 's we will fare !
We 'll bowse about till Daddie Care
Sing whistle owre the lave o't.
I am, &c.

Sae merrily 's the banes we 'll pyke,
An' sun oursells about the dyke ;
An' at our leisure, when ye like,
We 'll whistle owre the lave o't.
I am, &c.

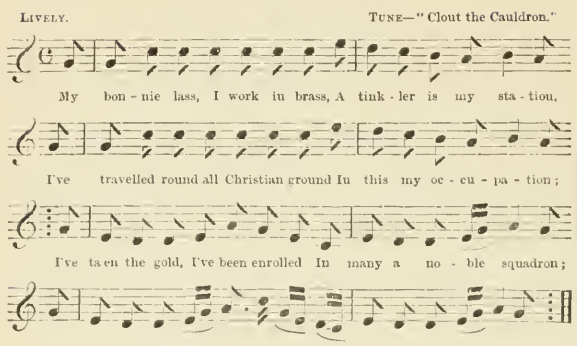
But bless me wi' your heaven o' charms,
An' while I kittle hair on thairms,
Hunger, cauld, an' a' sic harms,
May whistle owre the lave o't.
I am, &c.

RECITATIVO.

Her charms had struck a sturdy caird,
As weel as poor gut-scraper;
He taks the fiddler by the beard,
An' draws a roosty rapier:
He swoor by a' was swearing worth,
To speet him like a pliver,
Unless he would from that time forth
Relinquish her for ever.

Wi' ghastly e'e poor tweedle-dee
Upon his hunkers bended,
An' pray'd for grace wi' rueful' face,
An' so the quarrel ended.
But tho' his little heart did grieve
When round the tinkler prest her,
He feign'd to snirtle in his sleeve,
When thus the caird address'd her:

AIR.


Lively.
Tune—"Clout the Cauldron."
My bon-nie lass, I work in brass, A tink-ler is my sta-tion,
I've travelled round all Christian ground In this my oc-cu-pa-tion;
I've ta-en the gold, I've been enrolled In many a no-ble squadron;
But vain they searched, when off I marched To go and clout the cauldron.

Despise that shrimp, that wither'd imp,
Wi' a' his noise and cap'rin',
And tak a share wi' those that bear
The budget and the apron.
And by that stoup, my faith and houp,
And by that dear Kilbaigie,*
If e'er ye want, or meet wi' scant,
May I ne'er weet my craigie.
And by that stoup, &c.

RECITATIVO.

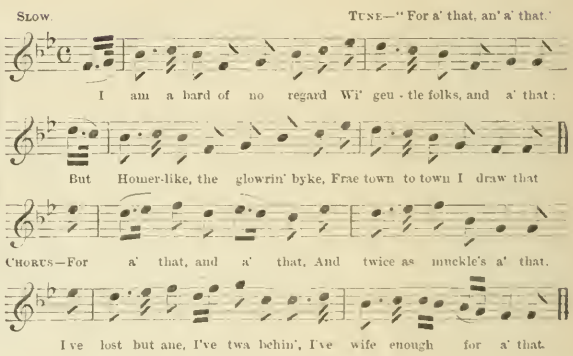
The caird prevail'd—the unblushing fair
In his embraces sunk,
Partly wi' love o'ercome sae sair,
And partly she was drunk.

Sir Violino, with an air
That show'd a man of spunk,
Wish'd unison between the pair,
And made the bottle clunk
To their health that night.

But hurchin Cupid shot a shaft,
That play'd a dame a shavie;
The fiddler raked her fore and aft,
Behint the chicken cavie.
Her lord, a wight o' Homer's craft,†
Though limping with the spavie,
He hirpled up, and lap like daft,
And shored them Daintie Davie
O' boot that night.

He was a care-defying blade,
As ever Bacchus listed!
Though Fortune sair upon him laid,
His heart she ever miss'd it.
He had no wish but to be glad,
Nor want but when he thirsted;
He hated nought but to be sad,
And thus the Muse suggested
His sang that night.

AIR.


Slow.
Tune—"For a' that, an' a' that."
I am a bard of no regard Wi' gen-tle folks, and a' that:
But Homer-like, the glowrin' byke, Frae town to town I draw that
Chorus—For a' that, and a' that, And twice as muckle's a' that,
I've lost but ane, I've twa behin', I've wife enough for a' that.

I never drank the Muses' stank,
Castalia's burn, and a' that;
But there it streams, and richly reams,
My Helicon I ca' that.

Great love I bear to a' the fair,
Their humble slave, and a' that;
But lordly will, I hold it still
A mortal sin to thraw that.

In raptures sweet, this hour we meet,
Wi' mutual love and a' that;
But for how lang the flee may stang,
Let inclination law that.

* "Kilbaigie:" a peculiar sort of whisky, so called from Kilbaigie distillery in Clackmannanshire, and a great favourite with Poosie Nansie's clubs.—(B).

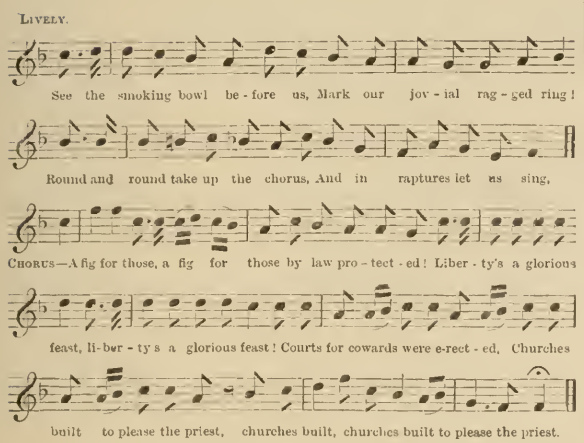
† "Homer's craft:" Homer is allowed to be the oldest bard or singer on record.—(B).

Their tricks and craft hae put me daft,
They've ta'en me in, and a' that:
But clear your decks, and here 's the Sex!
I like the jauds for a' that.
For a' that, an' a' that,
And twice as muckle 's a' that;
My dearest bluid, to do them guid,
They 're welcome till 't for a' that.

RECITATIVO

So sung the bard—and Nansie's wa's
Shook wi' a thunder o' applause,
Re-echoed from each mouth;
They toom'd their pocks, and pawn'd their duds,
They scarcely left to co'er their fuds,
To quench their lowin' drouth.
Then owre again the jovial thrang
The poet did request
To lowse his pack, an' wale a sang,
A ballad o' the best:
He rising, rejoicing,
Between his twa Deborahs,
Looks round him, and found them
Impatient for the chorus.

AIR.


Lively.
See the smoking bowl be - fore us, Mark our jov - ial rag - ged ring!
Round and round take up the chorus, And in raptures let us sing,
Chorus—A fig for those, a fig for those by law pro - tect - ed! Liber - ty's a glorious
feast, li - ber - ty's a glorious feast! Courts for cowards were e-rect - ed, Churches
built to please the priest, churches built, churches built to please the priest.

What is title? what is treasure?
What is reputation's care?
If we lead a life of pleasure,
'Tis no matter how or where!
A fig for, &c.

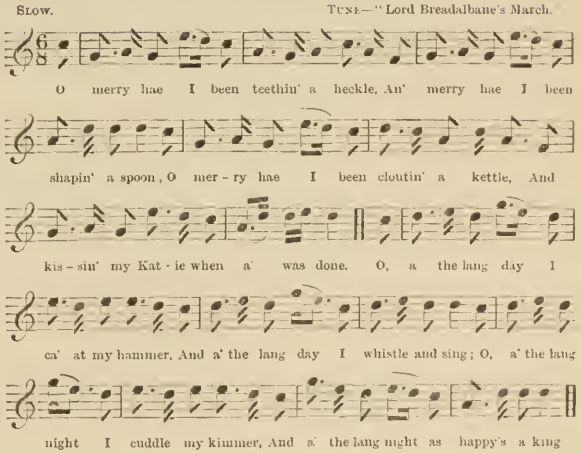
With the ready trick and fable,
Round we wander all the day;
And at night, in barn or stable,
Hug our doxies on the hay.
A fig for, &c.

Does the train-attended carriage
Through the country lighter rove?
Does the sober bed of marriage
Witness brighter scenes of love?
A fig for, &c.

Life is all a variorum,
We regard not how it goes:
Let them cant about decorum
Who have character to lose.
A fig for, &c.

Here 's to budgets, bags, and wallets
Here 's to all the wandering train!
Here 's our ragged brats and callets!
One and all cry out—Amen!
A fig for, &c.

KISSIN MY KATIE.*


Slow.
Tune—"Lord Breadalbane's March.
O merry hae I been teethin' a heckle, An' merry hae I been
shapin' a spoon, O mer - ry hae I been cloutin' a kettle, And
kis - sin' my Kat - ie when a' was done. O, a the lang day I
ca' at my hammer, And a' the lang day I whistle and sing; O, a' the lang
night I cuddle my kimmer, And a' the lang night as happy's a king

Bitter in dool I lickit my winnins
O' marrying Bess, to gie her a slave:
Blest be the hour she cool'd in her linnens,
And blythe be the bird that sings on her grave!
Come to my arms, my Katie, my Katie;
O come to my arms and kiss me again!
Drucken or sober, here's to thee, Katie!
An' blest be the day I did it again.

* Supposed to have been once intended for insertion in "The Jolly Beggars."

THE COTTAR'S SATURDAY NIGHT.

INSCRIBED TO R. AIKEN,* ESQ.

"Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor."

GRAY.

My loved, my honour'd, much respected friend!
No mercenary bard his homage pays;
With honest pride, I scorn each selfish end;
My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise.
To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,
The lowly train in life's sequester'd scene;
The native feelings strong, the guileless ways;
What Aiken in a cottage would have been;
Ah! though his worth unknown, far happier there I ween!

November chill blaws loud wi' angry sough;
The shortening winter-day is near a close:
The miry beasts retreating frae the plough;
The blackening trains o' craws to their repose:

The toil-worn Cottar frae his labour goes,
This night his weekly moil is at an end,
Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,
And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hameward bend.

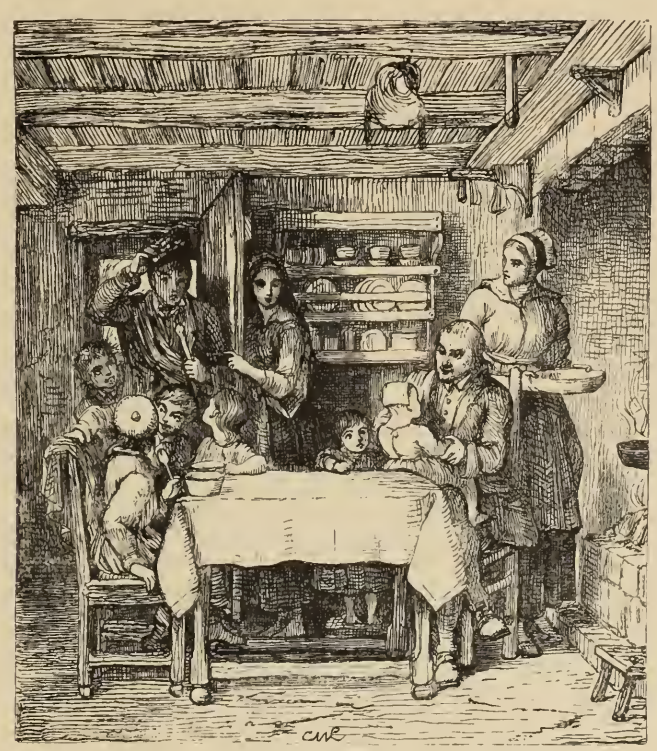
At length his lonely cot appears in view,
Beneath the shelter of an aged tree:
The expectant wee things, toddlin', stacher through
To meet their dad, wi' flichterin' noise an' glee.
His wee bit ingle, blinkin' bonnilie,
His clean hearth-stane, his thriftie wifie's smile,
The lisping infant, prattling on his knee,
Does a' his weary kiaugh and care beguile,
And makes him quite forget his labour an' his toil.

Belyve, the elder bairns come drapping in,
At service out amang the farmers roun';
Some ca' the plough, some herd, some tentie rin
A cannie errand to a neibour town:
Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman-grown,
In youthfu' bloom, love sparkling in her e'e,
Comes hame, perhaps, to show a braw new gown
Or deposite her sair-won penny-fee,
To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

* "Aiken:" a writer in Ayr and great friend of Burns. Burns at Mossgiel always made family worship.—See LIFE.

Wi' joy unfeign'd brothers and sisters meet,
And each for other's weelfare kindly speirs:
The social hours, swift-wing'd, unnoticed fleet:
Each tells the uncos that he sees or hears;
The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years;
Anticipation forward points the view.
The mother, wi' her needle an' her shears,
Gars auld claes look amaist as weel's the new:
The father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

Their master's and their mistress's command
The younkers a' are warned to obey;
And mind their labours wi' an eydent hand,
And ne'er, though out o' sight, to jauk or play:
"And O! be sure to fear the Lord alway,
And mind your *duty*, duly, morn an' night!
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,
Implore His counsel and assisting might:
They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright!



But hark! a rap comes gently to the door;
Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,
Tells how a neibour lad cam o'er the moor,
To do some errands, and convoy her hame.
The wily mother sees the conscious flame
Sparkle in Jenny's e'e, and flush her cheek;
With heart-struck anxious care, inquires his name,
While Jenny hafflins is afraid to speak;
Weel pleased, the mother hears its nae wild, worthless rake.

Wi' kindly welcome Jenny brings him ben;
A strappin' youth, he taks the mother's eye;
Blythe Jenny sees the visit 's no ill ta'en;
The father cracks of horses, pleughs, and kye.
The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,
But blate an' laithfu', scarce can weel behave;
The mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy
What makes the youth sae bashfu' and sae grave;
Weel pleased to think her bairn 's respected like the lave.

O happy love! where love like this is found;
O heart-felt raptures! bliss beyond compare!
I 've paced much this weary, mortal round,
And sage experience bids me this declare—
"If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,
One cordial in this melancholy vale,
'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair,
In other's arms breathe out the tender tale,
Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the evening gale."

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart—
A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth!
That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,
Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?
Curse on his perjured arts! dissembling smooth!
Are honour, virtue, conscience, all exiled?
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
Points to the parents fondling o'er their child;
Then paints the ruin'd maid, and their distraction wild?

But now the supper crowns their simple board,
The halesome parriteh, chief o' Scotia's food:
The soupe their only hawkie does afford,
That 'yont the hallan snugly chows her cood:
The dame brings forth, in complimental mood,
To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck, fell;
And aft he 's press'd, and aft he ca's it guid;
The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell
How 'twas a towmond auld, sin' lint was i' the bell.

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They round the ingle form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,
The big ha'-bible, ance his father's pride:
His bonnet reverently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets wearing thin an' bare;
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care;
And "Let us worship God!" he says with solemn air

They chant their artless notes in simple guise;
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim:
Perhaps "Dundee's" wild warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive "Martyrs," worthy of the name;
Or noble "Elgin" beets the heavenward flame,
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:
Compared with these, Italian trills are tame;
The tickled ears no heartfelt raptures raise;
Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page—
How Abram was the friend of God on high!
Or Moses bade eternal warfare wage
With Amalek's ungracious progeny;
Or how the royal bard did groaning lie
Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;
Or Job's pathetic plaint and wailing cry:
Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire;
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme—
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;
How He, who bore in heaven the second name,
Had not on earth whereon to lay His head:
How His first followers and servants sped;
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land;
How he, who lone in Patmos banishèd,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand;
And heard great Babylon's doom pronounced by Heaven's command.

Then kneeling down, to Heaven's Eternal King
The saint, the father, and the husband prays:
Hope "springs exulting on triumphant wing,"*
That thus they all shall meet in future days:
There ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise
In such society, yet still more dear;
While circling time moves round in an eternal sphere.

Compared with this, how poor Religion's pride,
In all the pomp of method and of art,
When men display to congregations wide
Devotion's every grace, except the heart!
The Power, incensed, the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;
But haply, in some cottage far apart,
May hear, well-pleased, the language of the soul,
And in His Book of Life the inmates poor enrol.

Then homeward all take off their several way:
The youngling cottagers retire to rest:
The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to Heaven the warm request
That He who stills the raven's clamorous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flowery pride,
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide;
But, chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside.

From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs.
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad:
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
"An honest man 's the noblest work of God:"
And certes, in fair virtue's heavenly road,
The cottage leaves the palace far behind;
What is a lordling's pomp? a cumbrous load,
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refined!

O Scotia, my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent!
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!
And O! may Heaven their simple lives prevent
From luxury's contagion, weak and vile!
Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-loved isle.

* Pope's "Windsor Forest."—(B.)

O Thou! who pour'd the patriotic tide
That stream'd through Wallace's undaunted * heart;
Who dared to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die, the second glorious part:
(The patriot's God peculiarly thou art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)
O never, never Scotia's realm desert;
But still the patriot, and the patriot bard,
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!

ADDRESS TO THE DEIL.

"O Prince! O chief of many throned pow'rs!
That led th' embattled seraphim to war.'—
MILTON.

O THOU! whatever title suit thee,
Auld Hornie, Satan, Nick, or Clootie,
Wha in yon cavern grim an' sootie,
Closed under hatches,
Spairges about the brunstane cootie, †
To scaud poor wretches!

Hear me, auld Hangie, for a wee,
An' let poor damnèd bodies be;
I 'm sure sma' pleasure it can gie,
E'en to a deil,
To skelp an' scaud poor dogs like me,
An' hear us squeel!

Great is thy power, an' great thy fame;
Far kenn'd an' noted is thy name;
An' though yon lowin' heugh 's thy hame,
Thou travels far;
An' faith! thou 's neither lag nor lame,
Nor blate nor scaur.

* "Undaunted:" it was originally "great unhappy."

† "Cootie:" a foot-pail, supposed to be filled with brimstone.

Whyles, rangin' like a roarin' lion,
For prey a' holes an' corners tryin';
Whyles on the strong-winged tempest flyin',
Tirlin' the kirks;
Whyles in the human bosom pryin',
Unseen thou lurks.

I 've heard my reverend grannie say,
In lanely glens ye like to stray;
Or where auld ruin'd castles, gray,
Nod to the moon,
Ye fright the nightly wanderer's way,
Wi' eldritch croon.

When twilight did my grannie summon,
To say her prayers, douce, honest woman!
Aft yont the dyke she 's heard you bummin',
Wi' eerie drone;
Or, rustlin', through the boortrees comin',
Wi' heavy groan.

Ae dreary, windy, winter night,
The stars shot down wi' sklentin' light,
Wi' you, mysel', I gat a fright,
Ayont the lough;
Ye, like a rash-bush, stood in sight,
Wi' wavin' sough.

The cudgel in my nieve did shake,
Each bristled hair stood like a stake,
When wi' an eldritch, stour, "quaick, quaick,"
Amang the springs,
Awa' ye squatter'd, like a drake,
On whistling wings.

Let warlocks grim an' wither'd hags
Tell how wi' you, on ragweed nags,
They skim the muirs and dizzy crags,
Wi' wicked speed;
And in kirkyards renew their leagues,
Owre howkit dead.

Thence countra wives, wi' toil an' pain,
May plunge an' plunge the kirn in vain;
For, oh! the yellow treasure 's taen
By witching skill;
And dawtit, twal-pint hawkie 's gaen
As yeld 's the bill.

Thence mystic knots mak great abuse
On young guidmen, fond, keen, an' crouse;
When the best wark-lume i' the house,
By cantrip wit,
Is instant made no worth a louse,
Just at the bit.

When thowes dissolve the snawy hoord,
And float the jinglin' icy-boord,
Then water-kelpies haunt the foord
By your direction,
And 'nighted travellers are allured
To their destruction.

An' aft your moss-traversin' spunkies
Decoy the wight that late an' drunk is:
The bleezin', curst, mischievous monkeys
Delude his eyes,
Till in some miry slough he sunk is,
Ne'er mair to rise.

When masons' mystic word an' grip
In storms an' tempests raise you up,
Some cock or cat your rage maun stop,
Or, strange to tell!
The youngest brother ye wad whip
Aff straught to hell.

Lang syne, in Eden's bonnie yard,
When youthfu' lovers first were paired,
And all the soul of love they shared,
The raptured hour,
Sweet on the fragrant, flowery swaird,
In shady bower:

Then you, ye auld, snick-drawing dog!
Ye cam to Paradise *incog.*,
An' play'd on man a cursed brogue,
(Black be your fa'!)
And gied the infant warld a shog,
'Maist ruin'd a'.

D'ye mind that day when in a bizz,
Wi' reekit duds an' reestit gizz,
Ye did present your smootie phiz
'Mang better folk,
An' sklented on the man of Uz
Your spitefu' joke?

An' how ye gat him i' your thrall,
An' brak him out o' house an' hall,
While scabs an' blotches did him gall,
Wi' bitter claw,
An' lowsed his ill-tongued, wicked scawl,
Was warst ava?

But a your doings to rehearse,
Your wily snares an' fechtin' fierce,
Sin' that day Michael* did you pierce,
Down to this time,
Wad ding a Lallan tongue, or Erse,
In prose or rhyme.

* "Michael:" *Vide* Milton, Book vi.—(B.)

And now, auld Cloots, I ken ye 're thinkin'
A certain Bardie 's rantin', drinkin',
Some luckless hour will send him, linkin',
To your black pit;
But, faith! he 'll turn a corner jinkin',
An' cheat you yet.

But fare you weel, auld Nickie-ben!
O wad ye tak a thought and men'!
Ye aiblins might—I dinna ken—
Still hae a stake:
I 'm wae to think upo' yon den,
E'en for your sake!

SCOTCH DRINK.

"Gie him strong drink, until he wink,
That 's sinking in despair;
An' liquor guid to fire his bluid,
That 's prest wi' grief an' care;
There let him bouse, an' deep carouse,
Wi' bumpers flowing o'er,
Till he forgets his loves or debts,
An' minds his griefs no more."

SOLOMON'S PROVERBS, xxxi. 6, 7.

LET other Poets raise a fracas
'Bout vines, an' wines, an' drucken Bacchus,
An' crabbit names an' stories wrack us,
An' grate our lug;
I sing the juice Scotch beare can mak us,
In glass or jug.

O thou, my Muse! guid auld Scotch drink;
Whether through wimplin' worms thou jink.
Or, richly brown, ream o'er the brink,
In glorious faem,
Inspire me till I lisp and wink,
To sing thy name!

Let husky wheat the haughs adorn,
An' aits set up their awnie horn,
An' pease an' beans, at e'en or morn,
Perfume the plain;
Leeze me on thee, John Barleycorn,
Thou king o' grain!

On thee aft Scotland chows her cood,
In souple scones, the wale o' food!
Or tumblin' in the boilin' flood
Wi' kail an' beef;
But when thou pours thy strong heart's blood,
There thou shines chief.

Food fills the wame, an' keeps us leevin':
Though life 's a gift no worth receivin'
When heavy dragg'd wi' pine an' grievin';
But oil'd by thee,
The wheels o' life gae downhill, scrievin',
Wi' rattlin' glee.

Thou clears the head o' doited Lear;
Thou cheers the heart o' drooping Care:
Thou strings the nerves o' Labour sair.
At 's weary toil;
Thou even brightens dark Despair
Wi' gloomy smile.

Aft, clad in massy siller weed,
Wi' gentles thou erects thy head;
Yet humbly kind in time o' need,
The poor man's wine,
His wee drap parritch, or his bread.
Thou kitchens fine.

Thou art the life o' public haunts;
But thee, what were our fairs and rants?
Even godly meetings o' the saunts,
By thee inspired,
When gaping they besiege the tents,
Are doubly fired.

That merry night we get the corn in,
O sweetly then thou reams the horn in!
Or reekin' on a New-year mornin'
In cog or bicker,
An' just a wee drap sp'ritual burn in,
An' gusty sucker!

When Vulcan gies his bellows breath,
An' ploughmen gather wi' their graith,
Oh rare! to see thee fizz an' freath
I' th' lugget cup!
Then Burnewin comes on like death
At every chap.

Nae mercy then for airn or steel;
The brawnie, bainie, ploughman chiel
Brings hard owrehip, wi' sturdy wheel,
The strong forehammer,
Till block and studdie ring and reel
Wi' dinsome clamour.

When skirlin' weanies see the light,
Thou maks the gossips clatter bright,
How fumblin' cuifs their dearies slight:
Wae worth the name!
Nae howdie gets a social night,
Or plack frae them.

When neibours anger at a plea,
An' just as wud as wud can be,
How easy can the barley bree
Cement the quarrel!
It 's aye the cheapest lawyer's fee
To taste the barrel.

Alake! that e'er my Muse has reason
To wyte her countrymen wi' treason!
But mony daily weet their weason
Wi' liquors nice,
An' hardly, in a winter's season,
E'er speir her price.

Wae worth that brandy, burnin' trash!
Fell source o' mony a pain an' brash!
Twins mony a poor, doylt, drucken hash,
O' half his days!
An' sends, beside, auld Scotland's cash
To her warst faes.

Ye Scots, wha wish auld Scotland well!
Ye chief, to you my tale I tell;
Poor plackless devils like mysel',
It sets you ill,
Wi' bitter, dearthfu' wines to mell,
Or foreign gill.

May gravels round his blather wrench,
An' gouts torment him inch by inch,
Wha twists his gruntle wi' a glunch
O' sour disdain,
Out owre a glass o' whisky punch
Wi' honest men.

O Whisky, soul o' plays an' pranks!
Accept a Bardie's gratefu' thanks;
When wantin' thee, what tuneless cranks
Are my poor verses!
Thou comes—they rattle i' their ranks
At ither's a—s!

Thee, Ferintosh! O sadly lost!
Scotland lament frae coast to coast!
Now colic grips an' barkin' hoast
May kill us a';
For loyal Forbes'* charter'd boast
Is ta'en awa!

Thae curst horse-leeches o' th' Excise,
Wha mak the whisky stells their prize!
Haud up thy han', Deil! ance, twice, thrice!
There, seize the blinkers!
An' bake them up in brunstane pies
For poor d——d drinkers.

Fortune! if thou 'll but gie me still
Hale breeks, a scone, an' whisky gill,
An' rowth o' rhyme to rave at will,
Tak' a' the rest,
An' deal 't about as thy blind skill
Directs thee best.

* "Forbes" of Culloden, who first by an Act of Parliament was empowered to distil whisky at his barony of Ferintosh, free of duty. In 1785 this privilege was abolished but a handsome compensation was made to the Forbes family.

THE AULD FARMER'S NEW-YEAR MORNING SALUTATION TO HIS AULD MARE MAGGIE,

ON GIVING HER THE ACCUSTOMED RIPP OF CORN TO HANSEL IN THE NEW-YEAR.

A GUID new-year I wish thee, Maggie!
Hae, there 's a ripp to thy auld baggie:
Though thou 's howe-backit now, and knaggie,
I 've seen the day
Thou could hae gaen like ony staggie
Out-owre the lay.

Though now thou 's dowie, stiff, an' crazy,
And thy auld hide 's as white 's a daisy,
I 've seen thee dapplet, sleek, an' glaizie,
A bonnie gray:
He should been tight that daur't to raise thee,
Ance in a day.

Thou ance was i' the foremost rank,
A filly buirdly, steeve, an' swank,
An' set weel down a shapely shank,
As e'er tread yird;
An' could hae flown out-owre a stank,
Like ony bird.

It 's now some nine-an'-twenty year,
Sin' thou was my guid-father's meare;
He gied me thee, o' tocher clear,
An fifty mark;
Though it was sma', 'twas weel-won gear,
An' thou was stark.

When first I gaed to woo my Jenny,
Ye then was trottin' wi' your minnie:
Though ye was trickie, slee, an' funnie,
Ye ne'er was donsie;
But hamely, tawie, quiet, an' cannie,
And unco sonsie.

That day ye pranced wi' muckle pride,
When ye bure hame my bonnie bride:
An' sweet an' gracefu' she did ride,
Wi' maiden air!
Kyle Stewart I could bragget wide
For sic a pair.

Though now ye dow but hoyte and hobble,
And wintle like a saumont-coble,
That day ye was a jinker noble,
For heels an' win'!
And ran them till they a' did wauble,
Far, far behin'.

When thou an' I were young and skeigh,
And stable-meals at fairs were driegh,
How thou wad prance, an' snore, an' skreigh,
An' tak the road!
Town's bodies ran, an' stood abeigh,
An' ca't thee mad.

When thou was corn't, an' I was mellow,
We took the road aye like a swallow:
At brooses* thou had ne'er a fellow
For pith and speed;
But every tail thou pay't them hollow,
Where'er thou gaed.

The sma', droop-rumpl't hunter cattle,
Might aiblins waur't thee for a brattle;
But sax Scotch miles thou try't their mettle
And gar't them whaizle:
Nae whip nor spur, but just a wattle
O' saugh or hazel.

Thou was a noble fittie-lan'
As e'er in tug or tow was drawn!

* "Broose:" a race at a wedding, see "Hogg's Tales," or "The Noctes, *passim.*

Aft thee an' I, in aught hours' gaun,
In guid March weather,
Hae turn'd sax rood beside our han',
For days thegither.

Thou never braindg't, an' fetch't, an' fliskit,
But thy auld tail thou wad hae whiskit,
An' spread abreed thy weel-fill'd brisket,
Wi' pith an' power,
Till spritty knowes wad rair't an' riskit,
An' slypet owre.

When frosts lay lang, and snaws were deep,
And threaten'd labour back to keep,
I gied thy cog a wee-bit heap
Aboon the timmer;
I kenn'd my Maggie wad na sleep
For that, or simmer.

In cart or car thou never reestit;
The steyest brae thou wad hae faced it;
Thou never lap, and sten't, and breastit,
Then stood to blaw;
But just thy step a wee thing hastit,
Thou snoov't awa'.

My pleugh is now thy bairn-time a',
Four gallant brutes as e'er did draw;
Forbye sax mae I 've selt awa',
That thou hast nurst:
They drew me thretten pund an' twa,
The vera warst.

Mony a sair daurg we twa hae wrought
An' wi' the weary warl' fought!
An' mony an anxious day I thought
We wad be beat!
Yet here to crazy age we 're brought,
Wi' something yet.

An' think na, my auld trusty servan',
That now perhaps thou 's less deservin',
An' thy auld days may end in starvin',
For my last fou;
A heapit stimpart I 'll reserve ane,
Laid by for you.

We 've worn to crazy years thegither;
We 'll toyte about wi' ane anither;
Wi' tentie care I 'll flit thy tether
To some hain'd rig,
Whare ye may nobly rax your leather,
Wi' sma' fatigue.

THE TWA DOGS.

A TALE.

'Twas in that place o' Scotland's isle,
That bears the name o' Auld King Coil,*
Upon a bonnie day in June,
When wearin' through the afternoon,
Twa dogs, that were na thrang at hame,
Forgather'd ance upon a time.

The first I 'll name, they ca'd him Cæsar,
Was keepit for his honour's pleasure;
His hair, his size, his mouth, his lugs,
Show'd he was nane o' Scotland's dogs,
But whalpit some place far abroad,
Whare sailors gang to fish for cod.

His lockèd, letter'd, braw brass collar
Shew'd him the gentleman an' scholar;
But though he was o' high degree,
The fient a pride, nae pride had he;
But wad hae spent an hour caressin',
Ev'n wi' a tinkler-gipsey's messan:
At kirk or market, mill or smiddie,
Nae tawted tyke, though e'er sae duddie,
But he wad stand, as glad to see him,
An' stroan'd on stanes an' hillocks wi' him.

The tither was a ploughman's collie—
A rhyming, ranting, raving billie,
Wha for his friend an' comrade had him,
And in his freaks had Luath ca'd him,
After some dog† in Highland sang,
Was made lang syne—Lord knows how lang.

He was a gash an' faithfu' tyke,
As ever lap a sheugh or dyke.
His honest, sonsie, baws'nt face
Aye gat him friends in ilka place;
His breast was white, his tousie back
Weel clad wi' coat o' glossy black;
His gawsie tail, wi' upward curl,
Hung owre his hurdies wi' a swirl.

Nae doubt but they were fain o' ither,
An' unco pack an' thick thegither;
Wi' social nose whyles snuff'd an' snowket;
Whyles mice an' moudieworts they howket;
Whyles scour'd awa' in lang excursion,
An' worry'd ither in diversion;
Till tir'd at last wi' mony a farce,‡
They set them down upon their a—e,
An' there began a lang digression
About the lords o' the creation.

* "Auld King Coil:" the ancient King of the Picts.

† "Dog:" Cuchullin's dog in Ossian's "Fingal."—(B.). Luath, a dog of Burns', killed the night before his father's death: Burns said he would immortalize him. Cæsar is imaginary.

‡ "Until wi' daffin weary grown,
Upon a knowe they sat them down."

CÆSAR.

I 've aften wonder'd, honest Luath,
What sort o' life poor dogs like you have;
An' when the gentry's life I saw,
What way poor bodies liv'd ava.

Our laird gets in his rackèd rents,
His coals, his kane, an' a' his stents:
He rises when he likes himsel';
His flunkies answer at the bell;
He ca's his coach; he ca's his horse;
He draws a bonnie silken purse

As lang's my tail, whare, through the steeks,
The yellow letter'd Geordie keeks.
Frae morn to e'en it's nought but toiling
At baking, roasting, frying, boiling;
An' though the gentry first are stechin,
Yet ev'n the ha' folk fill their pechan
Wi' sauce, ragouts, an' sic like trashtrie,
That's little short o' downright wastrie.
Our whipper-in, wee, blastet wonner,
Poor, worthless elf, it eats a dinner
Better than ony tenant-man
His honour has in a' the lan':

An' what poor cot-folk pit their painch in,
I own it's past my comprehension.

LUATH.

Trowth, Cæsar, whyles they're fash't eneugh:
A cottar howkin in a sheugh,
Wi' dirty stanes biggin a dyke,
Baring a quarry, an' sic like;
Himself, a wife, he thus sustains,
A smytrie o' wee duddie weans,
An' nought but his han'-daurg to keep
Them right an' tight in thack an' rape.

An' when they meet wi' sair disasters,
Like loss o' health or want o' masters,
Ye maist wad think, a wee touch langer,
An' they maun starve o' cauld and hunger:
But how it comes I never kent yet,
They 're maistly wonderfu' contented;
An' buirdly chiels, an' clever hizzies,
Are bred in sic a way as this is.

CÆSAR.

But then to see how ye 're negleckit,
How huff'd, and cuff'd, and disrespeckit!
L—d, man, our gentry care as little
For delvers, ditchers, an' sic cattle;
They gang as saucy by puir folk
As I wad by a stinkin' brock.
I 've noticed, on our laird's court-day,
An' mony a time my heart 's been wae,
Puir tenant bodies, scant o' cash,
How they maun thole a factor's snash;
He 'll stamp an' threaten, curse an' swear,
He 'll apprehend them, poind their gear;
While they maun stan', wi' aspect humble,
An' hear it a', an' fear and tremble!
I see how folk live that hae riches;
But surely poor folk maun be wretches!

LUATH.

They 're nae sae wretched 's ane wad think,
Though constantly on poortith's brink:
They 're sae accustom'd wi' the sight,
The view o 't gies them little fright.
Then chance and fortune are sae guided,
They 're aye in less or mair provided;
An' though fatigued wi' close employment,
A blink o' rest 's a sweet enjoyment.
The dearest comfort o' their lives,
Their grushie weans and faithfu' wives;
The prattling things are just their pride,
That sweetens a' their fireside.
An' whyles twalpenny worth o' nappy
Can mak the bodies unco happy;
They lay aside their private cares,
To mind the Kirk and State affairs:
They 'll talk o' patronage and priests,
Wi' kindling fury i' their breasts,
Or tell what new taxation 's comin',
An' ferlie at the folk in Lon'on.
As bleak-faced Hallowmas returns,
They get the jovial, rantin' kirns,
When rural life, o' every station,
Unite in common recreation;
Love blinks, Wit slaps, an' social Mirth
Forgets there 's Care upo' the earth.
That merry day the year begins,
They bar the door on frosty win's:
The nappy reeks wi' mantling ream,
An' sheds a heart-inspiring steam;
The luntin' pipe, an' sneeshin mill,
Are handed round wi' right guid will;
The canty auld folks crackin' crouse,
The young anes rantin' through the house—
My heart has been sae fain to see them,
That I for joy hae barkit wi' them.
Still it 's owre true that ye hae said,
Sic game is now owre often play'd.
There 's mony a creditable stock
O' decent, honest, fawsont folk,
Are riven out baith root and branch,
Some rascal's pridefu' greed to quench,
Wha thinks to knit himsel' the faster
In favour wi' some gentle master,
Wha, aiblins, thrang a parliamentin',
For Britain's guid his saul indentin'—

CÆSAR.

Haith, lad, ye little ken about it:
For Britain's guid!—guid faith, I doubt it!
Say rather, gaun as Premiers lead him,
An' saying Aye or No 's they bid him:
At operas an' plays parading,
Mortgaging, gambling, masquerading;
Or may be, in a frolic daft,
To Hague or Calais takes a waft,
To make a tour, an' tak a whirl,
To learn *bon ton*, an' see the worl'.
There, at Vienna or Versailles,
He rives his father's auld entails;
Or by Madrid he takes the route,
To thrum guitars, and fecht wi' nowte;
Or down Italian vista startles,
Whore-hunting amang groves o' myrtles;
Then bowses drumly German water,
To mak himsel' look fair and fatter,
An' clear the consequential sorrows,
Love-gifts of Carnival signoras.
For Britain's guid!—for her destruction!
Wi' dissipation, feud, an' faction.

LUATH.

Hech man! dear sirs! is that the gate
They waste sae mony a braw estate?
Are we sae foughten and harass'd
For gear to gang that gate at last?
O would they stay aback frae courts,
An' please themsel's wi' countra sports,
It wad for every ane be better,
The laird, the tenant, an' the cottar!
For thae frank, rantin', ramblin' billies,
Fient haet o' them 's ill-hearted fellows;
Except for breakin' o' their timmer,
Or speakin' lightly o' their limmer,

Or shootin' of a hare or moor-cock,
The ne'er-a-bit they're ill to poor folk.
But will ye tell me, Master Cæsar,
Sure great folk's life 's a life o' pleasure?
Nae cauld nor hunger e'er can steer them,
The vera thought o't need na fear them.

CÆSAR.

Lord, man, were ye but whyles whare I am,
The gentles ye wad ne'er envy them!
It 's true, they need na starve nor sweat
Thro' winter's cauld or simmer's heat;
They've nae sair-wark to craze their banes,
An' fill auld-age wi' grips an' granes:
But human bodies are sic fools,
For a' their colleges and schools,
That when nae real ills perplex them,
They mak enow themsel's to vex them;
An' aye the less they hae to sturt them,
In like proportion less will hurt them.
A country fellow at the pleugh,
His acres till'd, he 's right eneugh;
A country girl at her wheel,
Her dizzens done, she 's unco weel;
But gentlemen, an' ladies warst,
Wi' ev'ndown want o' wark are curst.
They loiter, lounging, lank an' lazy;
Though deil-hact ails them, yet uneasy:
Their days insipid, dull, an' tasteless;
Their nights unquiet, lang, an' restless.
An' ev'n their sports, their balls an' races,
Their galloping through public places,
There 's sic parade, sic pomp an' art,
The joy can scarcely reach the heart.
The men cast out in party-matches,
Then sowther a' in deep debauches.
Ae night they're mad wi' drink an' wh-ring,
Niest day their life is past enduring.
The ladies arm-in-arm in clusters,
As great an' gracious a' as sisters;
But hear their absent thoughts o' ither,
They're a' run deils an' jads thegither.
Whyles, owre the wee bit cup and platie,
They sip the scandal-potion pretty;
Or lee-lang nights, wi' crabbit leuks
Pore owre the devil's pictur'd beuks;
Stake on a chance a farmer's stackyard,
And cheat like ony unhang'd blackguard.
There 's some exceptions, man an' woman;
But this is gentry's life in common.

By this, the sun was out o' sight,
An' darker gloamin' brought the night;
The bum-clock humm'd wi' lazy drone;
The kye stood rowtin' i' the loan;
When up they gat, and shook their lugs,
Rejoic'd they were na men, but dogs;
And each took aff his several way,
Resolv'd to meet some ither day.

THE AUTHOR'S EARNEST CRY AND PRAYER*

TO THE SCOTCH REPRESENTATIVES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

"Dearest of distillation! last and best,
How art thou lost!"

PARODY ON MILTON.

Ye Irish lords, ye knights an' squires,
Wha represent our brughs an' shires,
An' doucely manage our affairs
In Parliament,
To you a simple Bardie's prayers
Are humbly sent.

Alas! my roopit muse is hearse!
Your honours' hearts wi' grief 'twad pierce,
To see her sittin' on her a—e
Low i' the dust,
An' screechin' out prosaic verse,
An' like to brust!

Tell them wha hae the chief direction,
Scotland an' me 's in great affliction,
E'er sin' they laid that curst restriction
On aqua vitæ;
An' rouse them up to strong conviction,
An' move their pity.

Stand forth, an' tell yon premier youth†
The honest, open, naked truth;
Tell him o' mine an' Scotland's drouth,
His servants humble:
The muckle devil blaw ye south,
If ye dissemble!

Does ony great man glunch an' gloom?
Speak out, an' never fash your thoom!
Let posts an' pensions sink or soom
Wi' them wha grant them:
If honestly they canna come,
Far better want them.

* "Prayer:" this was written before the Act anent the Scotch Distilleries, of session 1786; for which Scotland and the author return their most grateful thanks.—(B.) Previous to that the excise laws were enforced with the utmost rigour. The Act abolished the duties on drink and put a tax on stills.

† "Premier youth:" Pitt.

In gath'rin' votes you were na slack;
Now stand as tightly by your tack;
Ne'er claw your lug, an' fidge your back,
An' hum an' haw;
But raise your arm, an' tell your crack
Before them a'.

Paint Scotland greetin' owre her thrissle;
Her mutchkin stoup as toom 's a whistle;
An' d——d excisemen in a bussle,
Seizin' a stell,
Triumphant, crushin' 't like a mussel,
Or lampit shell.

Then on the tither hand present her,
A blackguard smuggler right behint her,
An' cheek-for-chow, a chuffie vintner,
Colleaguing join,
Picking her pouch as bare as winter
Of a' kind coin.

Is there that bears the name o' Scot,
But feels his heart's bluid rising hot,
To see his poor auld mither's pot
Thus dung in staves,
An' plunder'd o' her hindmost groat
By gallows knaves?

Alas! I 'm but a nameless wight,
Trod i' the mire out o' sight!
But could I like Montgomeries * fight,
Or gab like Boswell,†
There 's some sark-necks I wad draw tight,
An' tie some hose well.

God bless your Honours! can ye see't,
The kind, auld, cantie carlin greet,
An' no get warmly to your feet,
An' gar them hear it,
An' tell them wi' a patriot heat
Ye winna bear it?

Some o' you nicely ken the laws,
To round the period and pause,
An' wi' rhetoric clause on clause
To mak harangues;
Then echo through Saint Stephen's wa's
Auld Scotland's wrangs.

Dempster,‡ a true-blue Scot I 'se warran';
Thee, aith-detesting, chaste Kilkerran; §

An' that glib-gabbet Highland baron,
The Laird o' Graham: ‖
An' ane, a chap that 's d——d auldfarran,
Dundas ¶ his name.

Erskine,** a spunkie Norland billie;
True Campbells, Frederick an' Ilay; ††
An' Livingstone, the bauld Sir Willie:
An' mony ithers,
Whom auld Demosthenes or Tully
Might own for brithers.

See, sodger Hugh, my watchman stented,
If poets e'er are represented;
I ken if that your sword were wanted,
Ye 'd lend a hand;
But when there 's ought to say anent it,
Ye 're at a stand.

Arouse, my boys! exert your mettle
To get auld Scotland back her kettle;
Or faith! I 'll wad my new pleugh-pettle,
Ye 'll see 't or lang,
She 'll teach you, wi' a reekin' whittle,
Anither sang.

This while she 's been in crankous mood,
Her lost militia ‡‡ fired her bluid;
(Deil nor they never mair do guid,
Play'd her that pliskie!)
An' now she 's like to rin red-wud
About her whisky.

An' L—d, if ance they pit her till 't,
Her tartan petticoat she 'll kilt,
An' durk an' pistol at her belt,
She 'll tak the streets,
An' rin her whittle to the hilt,
I' th' first she meets!

For God-sake, sirs! then speak her fair,
An' straik her cannie wi' the hair,
An' to the muckle house repair
Wi' instant speed,
An' strive wi' a' your wit and lear
To get remead.

Yon ill-tongued tinkler Charlie Fox,
May taunt you wi' his jeers an' mocks;

* "Montgomeries:" Hugh Montgomery of Coilsfield, afterwards the twelfth Lord Eglinton.
† "Boswell:" Johnson's Bozzy.
‡ "Dempster:" of Dunnichen, Angusshire.
§ "Kilkerran:" Sir Adam Ferguson.

‖ "The Laird o' Graham:" Duke of Montrose.
¶ "Dundas:" afterwards Lord Melville.
** "Erskine:" probably Thomas, afterwards Lord Erskine.
†† "Frederick and Ilay:" one Lord Register, and the other Lord Advocate, for Scotland, brothers of the Duke of Argyle.
‡‡ "Militia:" a Militia Bill in 1782, when the country was threatened with invasion, was mangled by Rockingham, and lost.

But gie him t het, my hearty cocks!
E'en cowe the cadie!
An' send him to his dicing box
An' sportin' lady.

Tell you guid bluid o' auld Boconnock's *
I 'll be his debt twa mashlum bannocks,
An' drink his health in auld Nanse Tinnock's †
Nine times a week,
If he some scheme, like tea an' winnocks, ‡
Wad kindly seek.

Could he some commutation broach,
I 'll pledge my aith in guid braid Scotch,
He need na fear their foul reproach,
Nor erudition,
Yon mixtie-maxtie, queer hotch-potch,
The "Coalition." §

Auld Scotland has a raucle tongue;
She 's just a devil wi' a rung;
An' if she promise auld or young
To tak their part,
Tho' by the neck she should be strung,
She 'll no desert.

And now, ye chosen Five-and-Forty,
May still your mither's heart support ye;
Then, tho' a minister grow dorty,
An' kick your place,
Ye 'll snap your fingers, poor an' hearty,
Before his face.

God bless your Honours, a' your days,
Wi' sowps o' kail and brats o' claise,
In spite o' a' the thievish kaes,
That haunt St. Jamie's!
Your humble poet sings an' prays,
While Rab his name is.

POSTSCRIPT.

LET half-starv'd slaves in warmer skies
See future wines, rich-clust'ring, rise;
Their lot auld Scotland ne'er envies,
But, blythe and frisky,
She sees her freeborn, martial boys
Tak aff their whisky.

What tho' their Phœbus kinder warms,
While fragrance blooms and beauty charms,
When wretches range, in famish'd swarms,
The scented groves;
Or, hounded forth, dishonour arms
In hungry droves!

Their gun 's a burden on their shouther:
They downa bide the stink o' powther;
Their bauldest thought 's a hank'ring swither
To stand or rin,
Till skelp—a shot—they 're aff, a throw'ther,
To save their skin.

But bring a Scotchman frae his hill,
Clap in his cheek a Highland gill,
Say, such is royal George's will,
An' there 's the foe!
He has nae thought but how to kill
Twa at a blow.

Nae cauld, faint-hearted doubtings tease him;
Death comes, wi' fearless eye he sees him;
Wi' bluidy hand a welcome gies him;
An' when he fa's,
His latest draught o' breathin' lea'es him
In faint huzzas.

Sages their solemn een may steek,
An' raise a philosophic reek,
An' physically causes seek,
In clime an' season;
But tell me whisky's name in Greek,
I 'll tell the reason.

Scotland, my auld, respected mither!
Tho' whiles ye moistify your leather
Till, whare ye sit on craps o' heather,
Ye tine your dam;
Freedom and whisky gang thegither!
Tak aff your dram!

THE ORDINATION. ‖

"For sense, they little owe to frugal Heaven—
To please the mob they hide the little given."

KILMARNOCK wabsters, fidge an' claw,
An' pour your creeshie nations;
An' ye wha leather rax an' draw,
Of a' denominations;

* "Boconnock:" the Earl of Chatham was the son of Robert Pitt of Boconnock, in Cornwall.

† "Nanse Tinnock:" a worthy old hostess of the author's in Mauchline, where he sometimes studies politics over a glass of guid auld Scotch drink.—(B.)

‡ "Tea an' winnocks:" Pitt reduced the tax on tea, and laid one on windows, in 1784.

§ "Coalition:" between Fox, North, and Burke.

‖ "The Ordination:" of Rev. James Mackinlay, in Kilmarnock whose call and ordination, in place of a moderate, gave the highfliers a great triumph. His life in Kilmarnock was not a bed of roses, owing to a clamour at his marriage.

Swith! to the Laigh Kirk, ane an' a',
An' there tak up your stations;
Then aff to Begbie's* in a raw,
An' pour divine libations
For joy this day.

Curst Common-sense, that imp o' h—l,
Cam in wi' Maggie Lauder:† .
But Oliphant‡ aft made her yell,
An' Russell§ sair misca'd her:
This day Mackinlay taks the flail,
An' he 's the boy will blaud her!
He 'll clap a shangan on her tail,
An' set the bairns to daud her
Wi' dirt this day.

Mak haste an' turn King David owre,
An' lilt wi' holy clangor;
O' double verse come gie us four,
An' skirl up "the Bangor:"
This day the kirk kicks up a stoure,
Nae mair the knaves shall wrang her;
For Heresy is in her pow'r,
And gloriously she 'll whang her,
Wi' pith this day.

Come, let a proper text be read,
An' touch it aff wi' vigour,
How graceless Ham‖ leugh at his dad,
Which made Canaan a nigger;
Or Phineas¶ drove the murdering blade,
Wi' whore-abhorring rigour;
Or Zipporah,** the scauldin' jad,
Was like a bluidy teeger,
I' th' inn that day.

There, try his mettle on the creed,
And bind him down wi' caution—
That stipend is a carnal weed
He taks but for the fashion;.
And gie him o'er the flock to feed,
And punish each transgression;
Especial, rams that cross the breed,
Gie them sufficient threshin';
Spare them nae day.

Now, auld Kilmarnock, cock thy tail,
An' toss thy horns fu' canty;
Nae mair thou'lt rowte out-owre the dale,
Because thy pasture's scanty;
For lapfu's large o' gospel kail
Shall fill thy crib in plenty,
An' runts o' grace the pick an' wale,
No gi'en by way o' dainty,
But ilka day.

Nae mair by "Babel's streams" we 'll weep,
To think upon our "Zion;"
An' hing our fiddles up to sleep,
Like baby-clouts a-dryin'!
Come, screw the pegs wi' tunefu' cheep,
And o'er the thairms be tryin';
O, rare! to see our elbucks wheep,
And a' like lamb-tails flyin',
Fu' fast this day!

Lang, Patronage, wi' rod o' airn,
Has shor'd the Kirk's undoin;
As lately Fenwick,†† sair forfairn,
Has proven to its ruin:
Our patron, honest man! Glencairn,
He saw mischief was brewin';
An' like a godly, elect bairn,
He's waled us out a true ane,
And sound this day.

Now, Robertson,‡‡ harangue nae mair,
But steek your gab for ever;
Or try the wicked town of Ayr,
For there they 'll think you clever;
Or, nae reflection on your lear,
Ye may commence a shaver;
Or to the Netherton§§ repair,
An' turn a carpet-weaver,
Aff-hand this day.

Mu'trie‖‖ and you were just a match,
We never had sic twa drones;
Auld Hornie did the Laigh Kirk watch,
Just like a winkin baudrons,
And aye he catch'd the tither wretch,
To fry them in his caudrons;
But now his Honour maun detach,
Wi' a' his brimstone squadrons,
Fast, fast this day.

See, see auld Orthodoxy's faes
She 's swingein' through the city!
Hark, how the nine-tail'd cat she plays!
I vow it's unco pretty:

* "Begbie's:" a tavern near the church.

† "Maggie Lauder:" alluding to a scoffing ballad which was made on the admission of the late reverend and worthy Mr. Lindsay to the Laigh Kirk.—(B.). His wife, Margaret Lauder, had been housekeeper to Lord Glencairn; and he owed, it was said, his promotion to this.

‡ "Oliphant" an Evangelical minister in Kilmarnock.

§ "Russell:"—see note on "The Holy Fair," and Life.

‖ "Ham:" Genesis ix. 22.

¶ "Phinehas:" Numbers xxv. 8. ** "Zipporah:" Exodus iv. 25.

†† "Fenwick:" one Boyd was forced upon the parish of Fenwick in 1782.

‡‡ "Robertson:" the colleague of Mackinlay, a moderate.

§§ "Netherton:" a part of Kilmarnock full of weavers.

‖‖ "Mu'trie:" Mackinlay's predecessor.

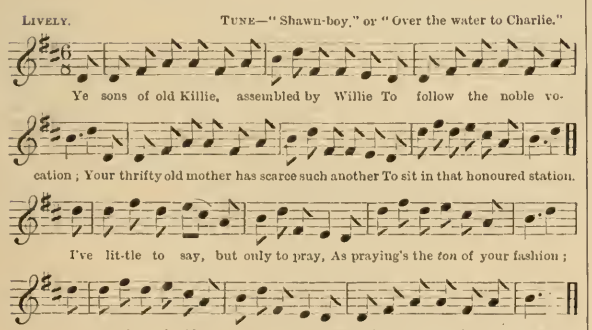
There, Learning, with his Greekish face,
Grunts out some Latin ditty;
And Common-sense is gaun, she says,
To mak to Jamie Beattie*
Her plaint this day.

But there 's Morality himsel',
Embracing all opinions;
Hear, how he gies the tither yell,
Between his twa companions!
See, how she peels the skin an' fell,
As ane were peelin' onions!
Now there, they 're packèd aff to hell,
An' banish'd our dominions,
Henceforth this day.

O happy day! rejoice, rejoice!
Come bouse about the porter!
Morality's demure decoys
Shall here nae mair find quarter:
Mackinlay, Russell, are the boys
That Heresy can torture;
They 'll gie her on a rape a hoyse,
And cowe her measure shorter
By th' head some day.

Come, bring the tither mutchkin in,
And here's—for a conclusion—
To ev'ry New-light† mother's son,
From this time forth, confusion!
If mair they deave us wi' their din,
Or Patronage intrusion,
We 'll light a spunk, and ev'ry skin,
We 'll rin them aff in fusion,
Like oil, some day.

YE SONS OF OLD KILLIE.


LIVELY.
TUNE—"Shawn-boy," or "Over the water to Charlie."
Ye sons of old Killie, assembled by Willie To follow the noble vo-
cation; Your thrifty old mother has scarce such another To sit in that honoured station.
I've lit-tle to say, but only to pray, As praying's the *ton* of your fashion;
A prayer from the Muse you well may excuse, 'Tis seldom her favourite passion.

* "James Beattie:" the author of the "Essay on Truth," and the "Minstrel."

† "New-light:" is a cant phrase in the West of Scotland for those religious opinions which Dr. Taylor of Norwich has defended so strenuously.—(B.).

Ye powers who preside o'er the wind and the tide,
Who markèd each element's border;
Who formed this frame with beneficent aim,
Whose sovereign statute is order;
Within this dear mansion may wayward contention
Or witherèd envy ne'er enter;
May secrecy round be the mystical bound,
And brotherly love be the centre!

TO JAMES SMITH.‡

"Friendship! mysterious cement of the soul,
Sweetener of life, and solder of society,
I owe thee much!"

BLAIR.

DEAR SMITH, the slee'st, pawkie thief
That e'er attempted stealth or rief,
Ye surely hae some warlock-breef
Owre human hearts;
For ne'er a bosom yet was prief
Against your arts.

For me, I swear by sun and moon,
And every star that blinks aboon,
Ye 've cost me twenty pair o' shoon,
Just gaun to see you;
And every ither pair that 's done,
Mair ta'en I 'm wi' you.

That auld, capricious carlin, Nature,
To mak amends for scrimpit stature,
She 's turn'd you aff, a human creature
On her first plan,
And, in her freaks, on every feature
She 's wrote the Man.

Just now I 've ta'en the fit o' rhyme,
My barmie noddle 's working prime,
My fancy yerkit up sublime
Wi' hasty summon:
Hae ye a leisure moment's time
To hear what 's comin'?

Some rhyme a neibour's name to lash;
Some rhyme (vain thought!) for needfu' cash;
Some rhyme to court the countra clash,
And raise a din;
For me, an aim I never fash—
I rhyme for fun.

‡ "James Smith:" a calico-printer near Linlithgow, who died in the West Indies. Burns wrote on him as a "Wag in Mauchline." He was a little vivacious man.

The star that rules my luckless lot
Has fated me the russet coat,
And damn'd my fortune to the groat;
But in requit,
Has blest me wi' a random shot
O' countra wit.

This while my notion 's ta'en a sklent,
To try my fate in guid black prent;
But still the mair I 'm that way bent,
Something cries, "Hoolie!
I red you, honest man, tak tent!
Ye 'll shaw your folly.

"There 's ither poets, much your betters,
Far seen in Greek, deep men o' letters,
Hae thought they had insured their debtors
A' future ages;
Now moths deform, in shapeless tatters,
Their unknown pages."

Then fareweel hopes o' laurel-boughs,
To garland my poetic brows!
Henceforth I 'll rove where busy ploughs
Are whistling thrang,
And teach the lanely heights an' howes
My rustic sang.

I 'll wander on, wi' tentless heed
How never-halting moments speed,
Till Fate shall snap the brittle thread;
Then, all unknown,
I 'll lay me with the inglorious dead,
Forgot and gone!

But why o' death begin a tale?
Just now we 're living sound an' hale,
Then top and maintop crowd the sail,
Heave Care o'er side!
And large, before enjoyment's gale,
Let 's tak the tide.

This life, sae far 's I understand,
Is a' enchanted fairy-land.
Where Pleasure is the magic wand,
That, wielded right,
Maks hours like minutes, hand in hand,
Dance by fu' light.

The magic wand then let us wield;
For, ance that five-an'-forty 's speel'd,
See crazy, weary, joyless eild,
Wi' wrinkled face,
Comes hoastin', hirplin' owre the field,
Wi' creepin' pace.

When ance life's day draws near the gloamin',
Then fareweel vacant, careless roamin';
And fareweel cheerfu' tankards foamin',
An' social noise;
An' fareweel dear, deluding woman,
The joy of joys!

O Life! how pleasant in thy morning,
Young Fancy's rays the hills adorning!
Cold-pausing Caution's lesson scorning,
We frisk away
Like schoolboys, at the expected warning,
To joy and play.

We wander there, we wander here,
We eye the rose upon the brier,
Unmindful that the thorn is near,
Among the leaves;
And though the puny wound appear,
Short while it grieves.

Some, lucky, find a flowery spot,
For which they never toil'd nor swat,
They drink the sweet and eat the fat,
But care or pain;
And, haply, eye the barren hut
With high disdain.

With steady aim some Fortune chase;
Keen hope does every sinew brace;
Through fair, through foul, they urge the race,
And seize the prey:
Then cannie, in some cozie place,
They close the day.

And others, like your humble servan',
Poor wights! nae rules nor roads observin';
To right or left eternal swervin',
They zig-zag on;
Till curst with age, obscure and starvin',
They aften groan.

Alas! what bitter toil an' straining—
But truce with peevish, poor complaining!
Is Fortune's fickle Luna waning?
E'en let her gang!
Beneath what light she has remaining,
Let 's sing our sang.

My pen I here fling to the door,
And kneel, Ye Powers! and warm implore,
"Though I should wander Terra o'er,
In all her climes,
Grant me but this, I ask no more,
Aye rowth o' rhymes.

"Gie dreeping roasts to countra lairds,
Till icicles hing frae their beards;
Gie fine braw claes to fine life-guards,
And maids of honour!
And yill and whisky gie to cairds,
Until they sconner.

"A title—Dempster* merits it;
A garter gie to Willie Pitt;
Gie wealth to some be-ledger'd cit,
In cent. per cent.;
But give me real, sterling wit,
And I 'm content.

"While ye are pleased to keep me hale,
I 'll sit down o'er my scanty meal,
Be 't water-brose or muslin-kail,
Wi' cheerfu' face,
As lang 's the Muses dinna fail
To say the grace."

An anxious e'e I never throws
Behint my lug, or by my nose;
I jouk beneath Misfortune's blows
As weel 's I may;
Sworn foe to sorrow, care, and prose,
I rhyme away.

O ye douce folk that live by rule,
Grave, tideless-blooded, calm and cool,
Compared wi' you—O fool! fool! fool!
How much unlike!
Your hearts are just a standing pool,
Your lives, a dyke!

Nae hair-brain'd sentimental traces
In your unletter'd, nameless faces!
In *arioso* trills and graces
Ye never stray,
But *gravissimo*, solemn basses
Ye hum away.

Ye are sae grave, nae doubt ye're wise;
Nae ferly though ye do despise
The hairum-scairum, ram-stam boys,
The rattlin' squad:
I see ye upward cast your eyes—
Ye ken the road.

Whilst I—but I shall hand me there—
Wi' you I 'll scarce gang ony where—
Then, Jamie, I shall say nae mair,
But quat my sang,
Content wi' you to mak a pair,
Whare'er I gang.

* "Dempster:" see note in "Earnest Cry and Prayer"—an eminent parliamentary patriot.

THE VISION.

DUAN FIRST.*

THE sun had closed the winter day,
The curlers quat their roaring play,
And hunger'd maukin ta'en her way
To kail-yards green,
While faithless snaws ilk step betray
Whare she has been.

The thrasher's weary flingin'-tree,
The lee-lang day, had tirêd me;
And whan the day had closed his e'e,
Far i' the west,
Ben i' the spence, right pensivelie,
I gaed to rest.

There, lanely, by the ingle-cheek
I sat and eyed the spewing reek,
That fill'd wi' hoast-provoking smeek
The auld clay biggin';
And heard the restless rattons squeak
About the riggin'.

All in this mottie, misty clime,
I backward mused on wasted time,
How I had spent my youthfu' prime,
An' done nae thing,
But stringin' blethers up in rhyme,
For fools to sing.

Had I to guid advice but harkit,
I might, by this, hae led a market,
Or strutted in a bank, and clarkit
My cash-account:
While here, half-mad, half-fed, half-sarkit,
Is a' the amount.

I started, muttering blockhead! coof!
And heaved on high my waukit loof,
To swear by a' yon starry roof,
Or some rash aith,
That I, henceforth, would be rhyme-proof
Till my last breath—

When, click! the string the sneck did draw;
An' jee! the door gaed to the wa';
An' by my ingle-lowe I saw,
Now bleezin' bright,
A tight, outlandish hizzie, braw,
Come full in sight,

Ye need na doubt, I held my whisht;
The infant aith, half-form'd, was crusht;
I glowr'd as eerie 's I 'd been dusht
In some wild glen;
When sweet, like modest Worth, she blusht,
And steppit ben.

Green, slender, leaf-clad holly-boughs
Were twisted, gracefu', round her brows,
I took her for some Scottish Muse,
By that same token,
And come to stop those reckless vows
Wad soon been broken.

A "hair-brain'd, sentimental trace"
Was strongly markèd in her face;
A wildly-witty, rustic grace
Shone full upon her;
Her eye, even turn'd on empty space,
Beam'd keen with honour.

Down flow'd her robe, a tartan sheen,
Till half a leg was scrimply seen;
And such a leg! my bonnie Jean
Could only peer it;
Sae straught, sae taper, tight, and clean,
Nane else cam near it.

Her mantle large, of greenish hue,
My gazing wonder chiefly drew;
Deep lights and shades, bold-mingling, threw
A lustre grand;
And seem'd, to my astonish'd view,
A well known land.

Here rivers in the sea were lost;
There mountains to the skies were tost;
Here tumbling billows mark'd the coast
With surging foam;
There distant shone Art's lofty boast,
The lordly dome.

Here Doon pour'd down his far-fetch'd floods;
There well-fed Irwine stately thuds:
Auld hermit Ayr staw through his woods,
On to the shore;
And many a lesser torrent scuds,
With seeming roar.

Low, in a sandy valley spread,
An ancient burgh rear'd her head;
Still, as in Scottish story read,
She boasts a race
To every nobler virtue bred,
And polish'd grace.

* "Duan:" a term of Ossian's for the different divisions of a digressive poem. See his *Cath-Loda*, vol. ii. of M'Pherson's translation.—(B.).

By stately tower, or palace fair,
Or ruins pendent in the air,
Bold stems of heroes, here and there,
I could discern;
Some seem'd to muse, some seem'd to dare,
With feature stern.

My heart did glowing transport feel,
To see a race* heroic wheel,
And brandish round the deep-dyed steel
In sturdy blows;
While, back-recoiling, seem'd to reel
Their Southron foes.

His Country's Saviour,† mark him well!
Bold Richardton's‡ heroic swell;
The chief on Sark§ who glorious fell
In high command;
And he whom ruthless fates expel
His native land.

There, where a sceptred Pictish shade‖
Stalk'd round his ashes lowly laid,
I mark'd a martial race, portray'd
In colours strong;
Bold, soldier-featured, undismay'd,
They strode along.

Through many a wild romantic grove,¶
Near many a hermit-fancied cove,
(Fit haunts for friendship or for love)
In musing mood,
An aged Judge, I saw him rove,
Dispensing good.

With deep-struck, reverential awe,
The learned sire and son** I saw:
To Nature's God and Nature's law
They gave their lore—
This, all its source and end to draw;
That, to adore.

Brydone's brave ward†† I well could spy
Beneath old Scotia's smiling eye;
Who call'd on Fame, low-standing by,
To hand him on,
Where many a patriot name on high,
And hero shone.

DUAN SECOND.

With musing-deep, astonish'd stare,
I view'd the heavenly-seeming Fair;
A whispering throb did witness bear
Of kindred sweet,
When with an elder sister's air
She did me greet.

"All hail! my own inspirèd bard!
In me thy native Muse regard;
Nor longer mourn thy fate is hard,
Thus poorly low.
I come to give thee such reward
As we bestow.

"Know, the great Genius of this land
Has many a light aërial band,
Who, all beneath his high command,
Harmoniously,
As arts or arms they understand,
Their labours ply.

"They Scotia's race among them share:
Some fire the soldier on to dare;
Some rouse the patriot up to bare
Corruption's heart;
Some teach the bard, a darling care,
The tuneful art.

"'Mong swelling floods of reeking gore,
They, ardent, kindling spirits pour;
Or 'mid the venal senate's roar
They, sightless, stand,
To mend the honest patriot-lore,
And grace the hand.

"And when the bard or hoary sage
Charm or instruct the future age,
They bind the wild poetic rage
In energy,
Or point the inconclusive page
Full on the eye.

"Hence Fullerton, the brave and young;
Hence Dempster's‡‡ zeal-inspired tongue;

* "A race:" the Wallaces.—(B.).

† "Country's saviour:" William Wallace.—(B.)

‡ "Richardton:" Adam Wallace, of Richardton, cousin to the immortal preserver of Scottish independence.—(B.)

§ "Sark:" Wallace, Laird of Craigie, who was second in command, under Douglas, Earl of Ormond, at the famous battle on the banks of Sark, fought *anno* 1448. That glorious victory was principally owing to the judicious conduct and intrepid valour of the gallant Laird of Craigie, who died of his wounds after the action.—(B.) Wallace of Craigie was in later days a very zealous reformer.

‖ "Pictish shade:" Coilus, king of the Picts, from whom the district of Kyle is said to take its name, lies buried, as tradition says, near the family-seat of the Montgomeries of Coilsfield, where his burial place is still shown.—(B.).

¶ "Romantic grove:" Barskimming, the seat of the late Lord Justice Clerk.—(B.). Sir T. Miller, afterwards President of the Court of Session.

** "Learned sire and son:" Catrine, the seat of the late Doctor and present Professor Stewart.—(B.).

†† "Brydone's brave ward:" Colonel Fullerton.—(B). Fullerton had travelled with Patrick Brydone, the once celebrated traveller, as his ward.

‡‡ See Epistle to James Smith.

Hence sweet harmonious Beattie sung
His "Minstrel" lays,
Or tore, with noble ardour stung,
The sceptic's bays.

"To lower orders are assign'd
The humbler ranks of human-kind,
The rustic bard, the labouring hind,
The artisan;
All choose, as various they 're inclined,
The various man.

"When yellow waves the heavy grain,
The threatening storm some strongly rein;
Some teach to meliorate the plain
With tillage-skill;
And some instruct the shepherd-train,
Blythe o'er the hill.

"Some hint the lover's harmless wile;
Some grace the maiden's artless smile;
Some soothe the labourer's weary toil
For humble gains,
And make his cottage-scenes beguile
His cares and pains.

"Some, bounded to a district-space,
Explore at large man's infant race,
To mark the embryotic trace
Of rustic bard;
And careful note each opening grace,
A guide and guard.

"Of these am I—Coila my name;
And this district as mine I claim,
Where once the Campbells,* chiefs of fame,
Held ruling power:
I mark'd thy embryo tuneful flame,
Thy natal hour.

"With future hope I oft would gaze,
Fond, on thy little early ways,
Thy rudely caroll'd, chiming phrase,
In uncouth rhymes;
Fired at the simple, artless lays
Of other times.

"I saw thee seek the sounding shore,
Delighted with the dashing roar;
Or when the North his fleecy store
Drove through the sky,
I saw grim Nature's visage hoar
Struck thy young eye.

"Or when the deep green-mantled earth
Warm cherish'd every floweret's birth,
And joy and music pouring forth
In every grove,
I saw thee eye the general mirth
With boundless love.

"When ripen'd fields and azure skies
Call'd forth the reaper's rustling noise,
I saw thee leave their evening joys,
And lonely stalk,
To vent thy bosom's swelling rise
In pensive walk.

"When youthful love, warm-blushing, strong,
Keen-shivering shot thy nerves along,
Those accents, grateful to thy tongue,
The adored Name,
I taught thee how to pour in song,
To soothe thy flame.

"I saw thy pulse's maddening play,
Wild send thee Pleasure's devious way,
Misled by Fancy's meteor ray,
By passion driven;
But yet the light that led astray
Was light from Heaven.

"I taught thy manners-painting strains,
The loves, the ways of simple swains,
Till now o'er all my wide domains
Thy fame extends;
And some, the pride of Coila's plains,
Become thy friends.

"Thou canst not learn, nor can I show,
To paint with Thomson's landscape glow;
Or wake the bosom-melting throe,
With Shenstone's art;
Or pour, with Gray, the moving flow
Warm on the heart

"Yet, all beneath the unrivall'd rose,
The lowly daisy sweetly blows;
Though large the forest's monarch throws
His army shade,
Yet green the juicy hawthorn grows
Adown the glade.

"Then never murmur nor repine;
Strive in thy humble sphere to shine;
And, trust me, not Potosi's mine,
Nor kings' regard,
Can give a bliss o'ermatching thine,
A rustic Bard.

* "Campbells:" the Loudoun branch of that family; Mossgiel was the Earl of Loudoun's property.

"To give my counsels all in one—
Thy tuneful flame still careful fan;
Preserve the dignity of man,
With soul erect;
And trust the Universal Plan
Will all protect.

"And wear thou *this*"—she solemn said,
And bound the holly round my head:
The polish'd leaves and berries red
Did rustling play;
And, like a passing thought, she fled
In light away.

SUPPRESSED STANZAS OF "THE VISION."*

After 18th stanza :—

WITH secret throes I marked that earth,
That cottage, witness of my birth;
And near I saw, bold issuing forth
In youthful pride,
A Lindsay race of noble worth,
Famed far and wide.

Where, hid behind a spreading wood,
An ancient Pict-built mansion stood,
I spied, among an angel brood,
A female pair;
Sweet shone their high maternal blood,
And father's air.†

An ancient tower‡ to memory brought
How Dettingen's bold hero fought;
Still, far from sinking into nought,
It owns a lord
Who far in western climates fought,
With trusty sword.

Among the rest I well could spy
One gallant, graceful, martial boy,
The *soldier* sparkled in his eye,
A diamond water;
I blest that noble badge with joy
That owned me *frater*.§

After 20th stanza :—

Near by arose a mansion fine,‖
The seat of many a muse divine;
Not rustic muses such as mine,
With holly crown'd,
But th' ancient, tuneful, laurell'd Nine,
From classic ground.

I mourn'd the card that Fortune dealt,
To see where bonnie Whitefoords dwelt;*
But other prospects made me melt,
That village near;†
There Nature, Friendship, Love, I felt,
Fond-mingling dear!

Hail! Nature's pang, more strong than death!
Warm Friendship's glow, like kindling wrath!
Love, dearer than the parting breath
Of dying friend!
Not ev'n with life's wild devious path,
Your force shall end!

The Pow'r that gave the soft alarms
In blooming Whitefoord's rosy charms,
Still threats the tiny, feather'd arms,
The barbèd dart,
While lovely Wilhelminia warms
The coldest heart.‡

After 21st stanza :—

Where Lugar leaves his moorland plaid,§
Where lately Want was idly laid,
I markèd busy, bustling trade,
In fervid flame,
Beneath a Patroness's aid,
Of noble name.

Wild, countless hills I could survey,
And countless flocks as wild as they;
But other scenes did charms display,
That better please,
Where polish'd manners dwell with Gray,
In rural ease.‖

Where Cessnock pours with gurgling sound;¶
And Irwine, marking out the bound,
Enamour'd of the scenes around,
Slow runs his race,
A name I doubly honour'd found,**
With knightly grace.

Brydon's brave ward,†† I saw him stand,
Fame humbly offering her hand,
And near, his kinsman's rustic band,‡‡
With one accord,
Lamenting their late blessed land
Must change its lord.

The owner of a pleasant spot,
Near sandy wilds, I last did note;§§
A heart too warm, a pulse too hot
At times, o'erran;
But large in ev'ry feature wrote,
Appear'd, the Man.

* These stanzas, along with the rest, were presented to Mrs. Stewart of Stair, in a manuscript book of ten leaves, called the "Stair Manuscript."

† Sundrum.—(B.) Hamilton of Sundrum was married to a sister of Colonel Montgomerie of Coilsfield

‡ Stair.—(B.) That old mansion was then possessed by General Stewart and his lady, to whom the MS. was presented.

§ Captain James Montgomerie, Master of St. James' Lodge, Tarbolton, to which the author has the honour to belong.—(B.)

‖ Auchinleck.—(B.)

* Ballochmyle. † Mauchline.

‡ A compliment to Miss Wilhelmina Alexander as successor, in that locality, to Miss Maria Whitefoord.

§ Cumnock.--(B.) ‖ Mr. Farquhar Gray.-(B.) ¶ Auchinskieth.-(B.)

** Caprington.—(B.) †† Colonel Fullerton (see note, p. 73).—(B.)

‡‡ Dr. Fullerton.—(B.) §§ Orangefield.—(B.)

WINTER NIGHT.

"Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm!
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these?"

SHAKSPEARE.

When biting Boreas, fell and doure,
Sharp shivers through the leafless bower;
When Phœbus gies a short-lived glower
Far south the lift,
Dim-darkening through the flaky shower,
Or whirling drift:

Ae night the storm the steeples rock'd,
Poor Labour sweet in sleep was lock'd,
While burns, wi' snawy wreaths up-chok'd,
Wild-eddying swirl,
Or through the mining outlet bock'd,
Down headlong hurl.

Listening the doors and winnocks rattle,
I thought me on the ourie cattle,
Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle
O' winter war,
And through the drift, deep-lairing, sprattle
Beneath a scaur.

Ilk happing bird, wee, helpless thing,
That, in the merry months o' spring,
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee?
Whare wilt thou cower thy chittering wing,
And close thy e'e?

Even you, on murdering errands toil'd,
Lone from your savage homes exiled,
The blood-stain'd roost, and sheep-cote spoil'd,
My heart forgets,
While pitiless the tempest wild
Sore on you beats.

Now Phœbe, in her midnight reign,
Dark muffled, view'd the dreary plain;
Still crowding thoughts, a pensive train,
Rose in my soul,
When on my ear this plaintive strain
Slow, solemn, stole:—

"Blow, blow, ye winds, with heavier gust!
And freeze, thou bitter-biting frost!
Descend, ye chilly, smothering snows!
Not all your rage, as now united, shows
More hard unkindness, unrelenting,
Vengeful malice unrepenting,
Than Heaven-illumined man on brother man bestows!

"See stern Oppression's iron grip,
Or mad Ambition's gory hand,
Sending, like blood-hounds from the slip,
Woe, want, and murder o'er a land!
Even in the peaceful rural vale,
Truth, weeping, tells the mournful tale,
How pamper'd Luxury, Flattery by her side,
The parasite empoisoning her ear,
With all the servile wretches in the rear,
Looks o'er proud Property, extended wide;
And eyes the simple rustic hind,
Whose toil upholds the glittering show,
A creature of another kind,
Some coarser substance, unrefined,
Placed for her lordly use thus far, thus vile, below.

"Where, where is Love's fond, tender throe,
With lordly Honour's lofty brow,
The powers you proudly own?
Is there, beneath Love's noble name,
Can harbour, dark, the selfish aim,
To bless himself alone?
Mark maiden-innocence a prey
To love-pretending snares,
This boasted Honour turns away,
Shunning soft Pity's rising sway,
Regardless of the tears, and unavailing prayers!
Perhaps, this hour, in Misery's squalid nest,
She strains your infant to her joyless breast,
And with a mother's fears shrinks at the rocking blast!

"O ye who, sunk in beds of down,
Feel not a want but what yourselves create,
Think, for a moment, on his wretched fate,
Whom friends and fortune quite disown!
Ill-satisfied keen Nature's clamorous call,
Stretch'd on his straw he lays himself to sleep,
While through the ragged roof and chinky wall,
Chill o'er his slumbers piles the drifty heap!
Think on the dungeon's grim confine,
Where Guilt and poor Misfortune pine!
Guilt, erring man, relenting view!
But shall thy legal rage pursue
The wretch already crushèd low
By cruel Fortune's undeservèd blow?
Affliction's sons are brothers in distress,
A brother to relieve, how exquisite the bliss!"

I heard nae mair, for chanticleer
Shook off the pouthery snaw,
And hail'd the morning with a cheer,
A cottage-rousing craw.

But deep this truth impress'd my mind—
Through all His works abroad,
The heart benevolent and kind
The most resembles God.

THE RANTIN' DOG, THE DADDIE O'T.

LIVELY. TUNE—"East Neuk o' Fife."

O wha my ba-bie clouts will buy? O wha will tent me when I
cry? Wha will kiss me where I lie? The rantin' dog, the daddie o't.
O wha will own he did the faut? O wha will buy the groanin' maut?
O wha will tell me how to ca't? The ran-tin' dog, the daddie o't.

When I mount the creepie chair,
Wha will sit beside me there?
Gie me Rob, I 'll seek nae mair—
The rantin' dog, the daddie o't.

Wha will crack to me my lane?
Wha will mak me fidgin' fain?
Wha will kiss me o'er again?
The rantin' dog, the daddie o't.

ADDRESS TO THE UNCO GUID, OR THE RIGIDLY RIGHTEOUS.

"My son, these maxims make a rule,
And lump them aye thegither;
The Rigid Righteous is a fool,
The Rigid Wise anither:
The cleanest corn that e'er was dight
May hae some pyles o' caff in;
So ne'er a fellow-creature slight
For random fits o' daffin."

SOLOMON.—*Eccles.* vii. 16.

O YE wha are sae guid yoursel'
Sae pious and sae holy,
Ye 've nought to do but mark and tell
Your neibours' fauts and folly!
Whase life is like a weel-gaun mill,
Supplied wi' store o' water,
The heapit happer's ebbing still,
And still the clap plays clatter.

Hear me, ye venerable core,
As counsel for poor mortals,
That frequent pass douce Wisdom's door
For glaiket Folly's portals;

I, for their thoughtless, careless sakes,
Would here propone defences,
Their dousie tricks, their black mistakes,
Their failings and mischances.

Ye see your state wi' theirs compared,
And shudder at the niffer;
But cast a moment's fair regard
What maks the mighty differ?
Discount what scant occasion gave,
That purity ye pride in,
And (what 's aft mair than a' the lave)
Your better art o' hidin'.

Think, when your castigated pulse
Gies now and then a wallop,
What ragings must his veins convulse,
That still eternal gallop!
Wi' wind and tide fair i' your tail,
Right on ye scud your sea-way;
But in the teeth o' baith to sail,
It maks an unco lee-way.

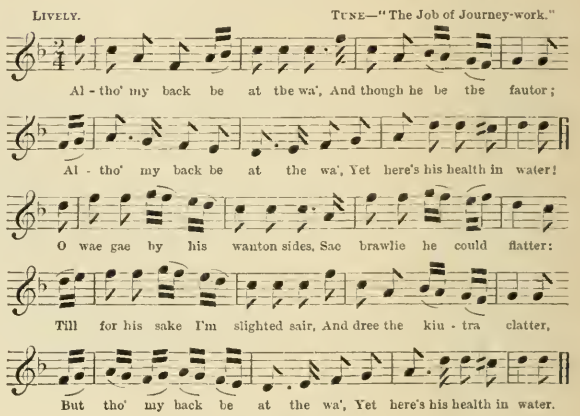
See Social Life and Glee sit down,
All joyous and unthinking,
Till, quite transmugrified, they 're grown
Debauchery and Drinking:
O, would they stay to calculate
The eternal consequences;
Or, your more dreaded hell to state,
Damnation of expenses!

Ye high, exalted, virtuous dames,
Tied up in godly laces,
Before ye gie poor frailty names,
Suppose a change o' cases;
A dear-loved lad, convenience snug,
A treacherous inclination;
But, let me whisper i' your lug,
Ye 're aiblins nae temptation.

Then gently scan your brother man,
Still gentler, sister woman;
Though they may gang a kennin' wrang,
To step aside is human:
One point must still be greatly dark,
The moving *why* they do it:
And just as lamely can ye mark,
How far perhaps they rue it.

Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
Decidedly can try us;
He knows each chord, its various tone,
Each spring, its various bias:
Then at the balance let 's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What 's done we partly may compute,
But know not what 's resisted.

HERE'S HIS HEALTH IN WATER.


LIVELY.
TUNE—"The Job of Journey-work."
Al - tho' my back be at the wa', And though he be the fautor;
Al - tho' my back be at the wa', Yet here's his health in water!
O wae gae by his wanton sides, Sae brawlie he could flatter:
Till for his sake I'm slighted sair, And dree the kiu - tra clatter,
But tho' my back be at the wa', Yet here's his health in water.

THE INVENTORY.

IN ANSWER TO A MANDATE SENT BY THE SURVEYOR OF TAXES.

SIR, as your mandate did request,
I send you here a faithfu' list,
O' gudes an' gear, an' a' my graith,
To which I 'm free to tak my aith.
Imprimis, then, for carriage cattle,
I hae four brutes o' gallant mettle,
As ever drew before a pettle;
My han'-afore 's* a guid auld has-been,
And wight and wilfu' a' his days been;
My han'-ahin'† 's a weel gaun filly,
That aft has borne me safe frae Killie,‡
And your auld borough mony a time,
In days when riding was nae crime.
But ance, when in my wooing pride,
I, like a blockhead, boost to ride,
The wilfu' creature sae I pat to,
(L—d, pardon a' my sins, and that too!)
I play'd my filly sic a shavie,
She 's a' bedevill'd wi' the spavie.

* "Han'-afore:" the fore-horse on the left-hand in the plough.
† "Han'-ahin:" the hindmost on the left-hand in the plough.
‡ "Killie:" Kilmarnock.

My fur-ahin'* 's a wordy beast
As e'er in tug or tow was traced:
The fourth 's a Highland Donald hastie,
A d——d red-wud Kilburnie blastie!
Forby a cowte, o' cowtes the wale,
As ever ran afore a tail.
An' he be spared to be a beast,
He 'll draw me fifteen pund at least.
Wheel carriages I hae but few—
Three carts, and twa are feckly new;
An auld wheel-barrow, mair for token,
Ae leg and baith the trams are broken:
I made a poker o' the spin'le
And my auld mither brunt the trin'le.
For men, I 've three mischievous boys,
Run-deils for rantin' and for noise;
A gadsman ane, a thrasher t' other,
Wee Davoc hauds the nowt in fother.
I rule them, as I ought, discreetly,
And often labour them completely;
And aye on Sundays, duly, nightly,
I on the questions targe them tightly;
Till, faith, wee Davoc's grown sae gleg,
Though scarcely langer than my leg,
He 'll screed you aff Effectual Calling,
As fast as ony in the dwalling.
I 've nane in female servant station,
(Lord, keep me aye frae a' temptation!)
I hae nae wife, and that my bliss is,
And ye hae laid nae tax on misses;
Wi' weans I 'm mair than weel contented,
Heaven sent me ane mair than I wanted;
My sonsie, smirking, dear-bought Bess,
She stares the daddie in her face,
Enough of ought ye like but grace.
But her, my bonnie, sweet, wee lady,
I 've said enough for her already;
And if ye tax her or her mither,
By the L—d! ye'se get them a' thegither.
And now, remember, Mr. Aiken,
Nae kind of licence out I 'm takin';
Frae this time forth, I do declare
I 'se ne'er ride horse nor hizzie mair;
Through dirt and dub for life I 'll paidle,
Ere I sae dear pay for a saddle;
I 've sturdy bearers, Gude be thankit!
My travel a' on foot I 'll shank it.
The kirk an' you may tak you that,
It puts but little in your pat;
Sae dinna put me in your book,
Nor for my ten white shillings look.
This list wi' my ain hand I 've wrote it,
The day and date as under notit;
Then know, all ye whom it concerns,
Subscripsi huic, ROBERT BURNS.

* "Fur-ahin':" the same on the right-hand in the plough.

TO MR. JOHN KENNEDY.†

Now, Kennedy, if foot or horse
E'er bring you in by Manchline Corse,
L—d, man, there 's lasses there wad force
A hermit's fancy;
And down the gate, in faith, they 're worse,
And mair unchancy.

But, as I 'm sayin', please step to Dow's,
And taste sic gear as Johnnie brews,
Till some bit callant bring me news
That you are there;
And if we dinna haud a bouse
I 'se ne'er drink mair.

It 's no I like to sit and swallow,
Then like a swine to puke and wallow;
But gie me just a true good fallow,
Wi' right ingine,
And spunkie ance to make us mellow,
And then we 'll shine.

Now, if ye 're ane o' warl's folk,
Wha rate the wearer by the cloak,
And sklent on poverty their joke,
Wi' bitter sneer,
Wi' you no friendship will I troke,
Nor cheap nor dear.

But if, as I 'm informèd weel,
Ye hate, as ill 's the vera deil,
The flinty heart that canna feel,
Come, sir, here 's to you!
Hae, there 's my haun', I wiss you weel,
And gude be wi' you!

TO MR. M'ADAM, OF CRAIGEN-GILLAN,‡

IN ANSWER TO AN OBLIGING LETTER HE SENT IN THE COMMENCEMENT OF MY POETIC CAREER.

Sir, o'er a gill I gat your card,
I trow it made me proud;
"See wha taks notice o' the bard!"
I lap and cried fu' loud.

Now deil-ma-care about their jaw,
The senseless, gawky million;
I 'll cock my nose aboon them a',
I 'm roosed by Craigen-Gillan!

'Twas noble, sir; 'twas like yoursel',
To grant your high protection:
A great man's smile, ye ken fu' well,
Is aye a blest infection—

† A humble clerk near Manchline, afterwards factor to Lord Breadalbane.

‡ "Craigen-Gillan:" an estate in Carrick.

Though, by his banes* wha in a tub
Match'd Macedonian Sandy!
On my ain legs through dirt and dub,
I independent stand aye.

And when those legs to gude warm kail
Wi' welcome canna bear me;
A lee dyke-side, a syboe-tail,
And barley-scone, shall cheer me.

Heaven spare you lang to kiss the breath
O' mony flowery simmers;
And bless your bonnie lasses baith:
I 'm tauld they 're lo'esome kimmers!

And God bless young Dunaskin's laird,
The blossom of our gentry!
And may he wear an auld man's beard,
A credit to his country!

TO A LOUSE,

ON SEEING ONE ON A LADY'S BONNET AT CHURCH.

Ha! whare ye gaun, ye crowlin' ferlie?
Your impudence protects you sairly:
I canna say but ye strunt rarely,
Owre gauze and lace;
Though, faith! I fear ye dine but sparely
On sic a place.

Ye ugly, creepin', blastit wonner,
Detested, shunn'd by saunt an' sinner,
How daur ye set your fit upon her,
Sae fine a lady?
Gae somewhere else, and seek your dinner
On some poor body.

Swith, in some beggar's haffet squattle,
There ye may creep, and sprawl, and sprattle
Wi' ither kindred, jumpin' cattle,
In shoals and nations;
Whare horn or bane ne'er daur unsettle
Your thick plantations.

Now haud ye there, ye 're out o' sight,
Below the fatt'rels, snug an' tight;
Na, faith ye yet! ye 'll no be right
Till ye 've got on it,
The very tapmost, tow'rin' height
O' Miss's bonnet.

My sooth! right bauld ye set your nose out,
As plump and gray as ony grozet;
O for some rank mercurial rozet,
Or fell, red smeddum,
I 'd gie you sic a hearty doze o 't,
Wad dress your droddum!

I wad na been surprised to spy
You on an auld wife's flannen toy;
Or aiblins some bit duddie boy,
On 's wyliecoat;
But Miss's fine Lunardi!† fie!
How daur ye do 't?

O Jenny, dinna toss your head,
An' set your beauties a' abread!
Ye little ken what cursed speed
The blastie's makin'!
Thae winks and finger-ends, I dread,
Are notice takin'!

O wad some Power the giftie gie us
To see oursel's as ithers see us!
It wad frae mony a blunder free us,
And foolish notion:
What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us,
And even devotion!

TO MRS. CUNNINGHAM,‡

ON RECEIVING A WORK OF HANNAH MORE'S.

Thou flattering mark of friendship kind,
Still may thy pages call to mind
The dear, the beauteous donor:
Though sweetly female every part,
Yet such a head, and more the heart,
Does both the sexes honour.
She show'd her taste refined and just
When she selected thee,
Yet deviating, own I must,
For so approving me;
But kind still, I mind still,
The giver in the gift,
I 'll bless her, and wiss her
A Friend aboon the lift.

* "His banes:" Diogenes.

† "Lunardi:" the famous aeronaut—bonnets were called after him in 1785.

‡ Mrs. Cunningham of Enterkin, daughter of Mrs. Stewart of Stair, and a distant relative of Robert Aiken. It was inclosed in a letter to Aiken by Burns, April, 1786.

THE HOLY FAIR.*

"A robe of seeming truth and trust
Hid crafty observation;
And secret hung, with poison'd crust,
The dirk of defamation:
A mask that like the gorget show'd
Dye-varying on the pigeon;
And for a mantle, large and broad,
He wrapt him in Religion."

HYPOCRISY A-LA-MODE.

Upon a simmer Sunday morn,
When Nature's face is fair,
I walkèd forth to view the corn,
An' snuff the caller air.
The risin' sun owre Galston muirs
Wi' glorious light was glintin';
The hares were hirplin' down the furs,
The lav'rocks they were chantin'
Fu' sweet that day.

As lightsomely I glowr'd abroad,
To see a scene sae gay,
Three hizzies, early at the road,
Cam skelpin' up the way;
Twa had manteeles o' dolefu' black,
But ane wi' lyart lining;
The third, that gaed a wee a-back,
Was in the fashion shining,
Fu' gay that day.

The twa appear'd like sisters twin,
In feature, form, an' claes;
Their visage, wither'd, lang, an' thin,
An' sour as ony slaes:
The third cam up, hap-stap-an'-lowp,
As light as ony lambie,
An' wi' a curchie low did stoop,
As soon as e'er she saw me,
Fu' kind that day.

Wi' bonnet aff, quoth I, "Sweet lass,
I think ye seem to ken me;
I 'm sure I 've seen that bonnie face,
But yet I canna name ye."
Quo' she, an' laughin' as she spak,
An' taks me by the hands,
"Ye, for my sake, hae gi'en the feck
Of a' the ten commands
A screed some day.

"My name is Fun—your cronie dear,
The nearest friend ye hae;
An' this is Superstition here,
An' that 's Hypocrisy.
I 'm gaun to Mauchline Holy Fair,
To spend an hour in daffin':
Gin ye 'll go there, yon runkled pair,
We will get famous laughin'
At them this day."

Quoth I, "Wi' a' my heart I 'll do 't;
I 'll get my Sunday's sark on,
An' meet you on the holy spot—
Faith, we 'se hae fine remarkin'!"
Then I gaed hame at crowdie-time,
An' soon I made me ready;
For roads were clad frae side to side
Wi' mony a wearie body,
In droves that day.

Here farmers gash, in ridin' graith,
Gaed hoddin by their cottars;
There swankies young, in braw braid-claith,
Are springin' o'er the gutters;
The lasses, skelpin' barefit, thrang,
In silks an' scarlets glitter;
Wi' sweet-milk cheese, in mony a whang,
An' farls baked wi' butter,
Fu' crump that day.

When by the plate we set our nose,
Weel heapèd up wi' ha'pence,
A greedy glowr Black-bonnet † throws,
An' we maun draw our tippence.
Then in we go to see the show,
On every side they 're gatherin',
Some carrying deals, some chairs an' stools,
An' some are busy blethrin'
Right loud that day.

Here stands a shed to fend the showers
An' screen our countra gentry,
There racer Jess,‡ an' twa-three wh-res,
Are blinkin' at the entry.
Here sits a raw of tittlin' jades,
Wi' heavin' breasts an' bare neck,
An' there a batch of wabster lads,
Blackguardin' frae Kilmarnock,
For fun this day.

Here some are thinkin' on their sins,
An' some upo' their claes;
Ane curses feet that fyl'd his shins,
Anither sighs an' prays;
On this hand sits a chosen swatch,
Wi' screw'd-up grace-proud faces;
On that a set o' chaps at watch,
Thrang winkin' on the lasses
To chairs that day.

* "Holy Fair" is a common phrase in the west of Scotland for a sacramental occasion.—(B.)

† "Black-bonnet:" the elder at the *plate*.

‡ "Racer Jess:" a half-witted girl named Gibson, of remarkable pedestrian powers daughter of Poosie Nancy.

O happy is that man an' blest !
(Nae wonder that it pride him !)
Whase ain dear lass, that he likes best,
Comes clinkin' down beside him !
Wi' arm repos'd on the chair back,
He sweetly does compose him ;
Which, by degrees, slips round her neck,
An' 's loof upon her bosom,
Unkenn'd that day.

Now a' the congregation o'er
Is silent expectation ;
For Moodie * speels the holy door
Wi' tidings o' damnation.
Should Hornie, as in ancient days,
'Mang sons o' God present him,
The vera sight o' Moodie's face
To 's ain het hame had sent him
Wi' fright that day.

Hear how he clears the points o' Faith
Wi' rattlin' an' wi' thumpin' !
Now meekly calm, now wild in wrath,
He 's stampin' an' he 's jumpin' !
His lengthen'd chin, his turn'd-up snout,
His eldritch squeel and gestures,
O how they fire the heart devout,
Like cantharidian plaisters,
On sic a day !

But hark ! the tent has changed its voice ;
There 's peace an' rest nae langer :
For a' the real judges rise,
They canna sit for anger.
Smith † opens out his cauld harangues
On practice and on morals ;
An' aff the godly pour in thrangs,
To gie the jars an' barrels
A lift that day.

What signifies his barren shine
Of moral powers an' reason ?
His English style, an' gesture fine,
Are a' clean out o' season.
Like Socrates or Antonine,
Or some auld pagan heathen,
The moral man he does define,
But ne'er a word o' faith in
That 's right that day.

In guid time comes an antidote
Against sic poison'd nostrum ;
For Peebles,‡ frae the Water-fit,
Ascends the holy rostrum ;
See, up he 's got the word o' God,
An' meek an' mim has view'd it,
While Common-Sense § has ta'en the road,
An' aff an' up the Cowgate, ‖
Fast, fast, that day.

Wee Miller ¶ niest the guard relieves,
An' Orthodoxy raibles,
Though in his heart he weel believes,
An' thinks it auld wives' fables :
But, faith, the birkie wants a manse,
So, cannily he hums them ;
Although his carnal wit an' sense
Like hafflins-ways o'ercomes him
At times that day.

Now butt an' ben, the change-house fills,
Wi' yill-caup commentators :
Here 's crying out for bakes and gills,
An' there the pint-stoup clatters ;
While thick an' thrang, an' loud an' lang,
Wi' logic an' wi' scripture,
They raise a din, that in the end
Is like to breed a rupture
O' wrath that day.

Leeze me on drink ! it gies us mair
Than either school or college :
It kindles wit, it waukens lear,
It pangs us fou o' knowledge.
Be 't whisky gill, or penny wheep,
Or ony stronger potion,
It never fails, on drinking deep,
To kittle up our notion
By night or day.

The lads an' lasses, blythely bent
To mind baith saul an' body,
Sit round the table, weel content,
An' steer about the toddy.
On this ane's dress, an' that ane's leuk,
They 're makin' observations :
While some are cozy i' the neuk,
An' formin' assignations
To meet some day.

But now the Lord's ain trumpet touts,
Till a' the hills are rairin',
An' echoes back return the shouts ;
Black Russell ** is na sparin' :

* "Moodie:" minister of Riccarton, a great preacher of terror, one of the heroes of the "Twa Herds."

† "Smith:" minister of Galston, see "Kirk's Alarm."

‡ "Peebles," Dr. William, minister of Newton-on-Ayr, called the "Water-foot;" an Evangelical preacher.

§ "Common-Sense:" one Mackenzie, doctor in the village, who had written on some controversial topic under that sobriquet.

‖ "Cowgate:" a street so called, which faces the tent in Mauchline.—(B.)

¶ "Miller:" afterwards minister of Kilmaurs, a man of low stature, but great girth. The above obstructed his promotion.

** "Black Russell:" afterwards of Stirling.—See LIFE.

His piercin' words, like Highland swords,
Divide the joints an' marrow;
His talk o' hell, whare devils dwell,
Our vera sauls does harrow *
Wi' fright that day!

A vast, unbottom'd, boundless pit,
Fill'd fou o' lowin' brunstane,
Whase ragin' flame an' scorchin' heat
Wad melt the hardest whun-stane!
The half-asleep start up wi' fear,
An' think they hear it roarin',
When presently it does appear
'Twas but some neibour snorin'
Asleep that day.

'T wad be owre lang a tale to tell
How mony stories past,
An' how they crowded to the yill,
When they were a' dismist:
How drink gaed round, in cogs an' caups,
Amang the furms and benches:
An' cheese an' bread, frae women's laps,
Was dealt about in lunches
An' dauds that day.

In comes a gawsie, gash guidwife,
An' sits down by the fire,
Syne draws her kebbuck an' her knife;
The lasses they are shyer.
The auld guidmen, about the grace,
Frae side to side they bother,
Till some ane by his bonnet lays,
An' gi'es them 't like a tether,
Fu' lang that day.

Waesucks! for him that gets nae lass,
Or lasses that hae naething!
Sma' need has he to say a grace,
Or melvie his braw claithing!
O wives, be mindfu' ance yoursel'
How bonnie lads ye wanted,
An' dinna, for a kebbuck-heel,
Let lasses be affronted
On sic a day!

Now Clinkumbell, wi' rattlin' tow,
Begins to jow an' croon;
Some swagger hame the best they dow,
Some wait the afternoon.
At slaps the billies halt a blink,
Till lasses strip their shoon:
Wi' faith an' hope, an' love an' drink,
They 're a' in famous tune
For crack that day.

* "Sauls does harrow:" Shakspeare's "Hamlet."—(B.)

How mony hearts this day converts
O' sinners and o' lasses!
Their hearts o' stane, gin night, are gane
As saft as ony flesh is.
There 's some are fou o' love divine;
There 's some are fou o' brandy;
An' mony jobs that day begin,
May end in houghmagandie †
Some ither day.

SONG IN SPRING.

LIVELY. TUNE—"Johnnie's Grey Breeks."

A - gain re - joic - ing Na-ture sees Her robe assume its ver-nal hues,
Her leafy locks wave in the breeze, All freshly steep'd in morning dews.
CHORUS—And maun I still on ‡ Me - nie doat, And bear the scorn that's in her e'e?
For it's jet, jet black, an' it's like a hawk, An' it win-na let a bo - dy be!
And maun I still on Me - nie doat, And bear the scorn that's in her e'e?
For its jet, jet black, an' it's like a hawk, An' it winna let a bo - dy be! §

In vain to me the cowslips blaw,
In vain to me the violets spring;
In vain to me, in glen or shaw,
The mavis and the lintwhite sing.
And maun I still, &c.

The merry ploughboy cheers his team,
Wi' joy the tentie seedsman stalks;
But life to me 's a weary dream,
A dream of ane that never wauks.
And maun I still, &c.

The wanton coot the water skims,
Amang the reeds the ducklings cry,
The stately swan majestic swims,
And everything is blest but I.
And maun I still, &c.

† See LIFE.

‡ "Menie:" is the common abbreviation of Marianne.

§ This chorus is part of a song composed by a gentleman in Edinburgh, a particular friend of the author's.—(B.)

The shepherd steeks his faulding slap,
And owre the moorlands whistles shrill;
Wi' wild, unequal, wandering step,
I meet him on the dewy hill.
And maun I still, &c.

And when the lark, 'tween light and dark,
Blythe waukens by the daisy's side,
And mounts and sings on flittering wings,
A woe-worn ghaist I hameward glide.
And maun I still, &c.

Come, Winter, with thine angry howl,
And raging, bend the naked tree;
Thy gloom will soothe my cheerless soul,
When Nature all is sad like me!
And maun I still, &c.

TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY,*

ON TURNING ONE DOWN WITH THE PLOUGH IN APRIL, 1786.

Wee, modest, crimson-tippèd flower,
Thou 's met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush amang the stoure
Thy slender stem;
To spare thee now is past my power,
Thou bonnie gem.

Alas! it 's no thy neibour sweet,
The bonnie lark, companion meet!
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet,
Wi' spreckled breast,
When upward-springing, blythe, to greet
The purpling east.

* Called originally "To a Gowan"

Cauld blew the bitter-biting north
Upon thy early, humble birth;
Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth
Amid the storm,
Scarce rear'd above the parent-earth
Thy tender form.

The flaunting flowers our gardens yield,
High sheltering woods and wa's maun shield;
But thou, beneath the random bield
O' clod or stane,
Adorns the histie stibble-field,
Unseen, alane.

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
Thy snawie bosom sunward spread,
Thou lifts thy unassuming head
In humble guise;
But now the share uptears thy bed,
And low thou lies!

Such is the fate of artless maid,
Sweet floweret of the rural shade!
By love's simplicity betray'd,
And guileless trust;
Till she, like thee, all soil'd, is laid
Low i' the dust.

Such is the fate of simple bard,
On life's rough ocean luckless starr'd!
Unskilful he to note the card
Of prudent lore,
Till billows rage, and gales blow hard,
And whelm him o'er!

Such fate to suffering worth is given,
Who long with wants and woes has striven,
By human pride or cunning driven
To misery's brink,
Till wrench'd of every stay but Heaven,
He, ruin'd, sink!

Even thou who mourn'st the daisy's fate,
That fate is thine—no distant date;
Stern Ruin's plough-share drives, elate,
Full on thy bloom,
Till crush'd beneath the furrow's weight,
Shall be thy doom.

TO RUIN.

All hail, inexorable lord!
At whose destruction-breathing word,
The mightiest empires fall!
Thy cruel, woe-delighted train,
The ministers of grief and pain,
A sullen welcome, all!
With stern-resolv'd, despairing eye,
I see each aimèd dart;
For one has cut my dearest tie,
And quivers in my heart.
Then low'ring and pouring,
The storm no more I dread;
Though thick'ning, and black'ning,
Round my devoted head.

And thou grim Pow'r by life abhorr'd,
While life a pleasure can afford,
Oh! hear a wretch's pray'r!
No more I shrink appall'd, afraid;
I court, I beg thy friendly aid,
To close this scene of care!
When shall my soul, in silent peace,
Resign life's joyless day—
My weary heart its throbbings cease,
Cold mouldering in the clay?
No fear more, no tear more,
To stain my lifeless face,
Enclaspèd, and graspèd,
Within thy cold embrace!

THE LAMENT,

OCCASIONED BY THE UNFORTUNATE ISSUE OF A FRIEND'S AMOUR.

"Alas! how oft does goodness wound itself,
And sweet affection prove the spring of woe!"

O thou pale orb that silent shines
While care-untroubled mortals sleep!
Thou seest a wretch who inly pines,
And wanders here to wail and weep!
With woe I nightly vigils keep,
Beneath thy wan, unwarming beam;
And mourn, in lamentation deep,
How life and love are all a dream!

I joyless view thy rays adorn
The faintly-markèd, distant hill;
I joyless view thy trembling horn
Reflected in the gurgling rill:
My fondly-fluttering heart, be still!
Thou busy pow'r, remembrance, cease!
Ah! must the agonizing thrill
For ever bar returning peace?

No idly-feign'd, poetic pains,
My sad, love-lorn lamentings claim:
No shepherd's pipe—Arcadian strains;
No fabled tortures, quaint and tame.
The plighted faith, the mutual flame,
The oft-attested Pow'rs above,
The promis'd father's tender name;
These were the pledges of my love!

Encircled in her clasping arms,
How have the raptur'd moments flown!
How have I wish'd for fortune's charms,
For her dear sake, and her's alone!
And, must I think it! is she gone,
My secret heart's exulting boast?
And does she heedless hear my groan?
And is she ever, ever lost?

Oh! can she bear so base a heart,
So lost to honour, lost to truth,
As from the fondest lover part,
The plighted husband of her youth?
Alas! life's path may be unsmooth!
Her way may lie through rough distress!
Then, who her pangs and pains will soothe,
Her sorrows share, and make them less?

Ye wingèd hours that o'er us pass'd,
Enraptur'd more, the more enjoy'd,
Your dear remembrance in my breast
My fondly-treasur'd thoughts employ'd:
That breast, how dreary now, and void,
For her too scanty once of room!
Ev'n ev'ry ray of hope destroy'd,
And not a wish to gild the gloom!

The morn, that warns th' approaching day,
Awakes me up to toil and woe;
I see the hours in long array,
That I must suffer, lingering slow:
Full many a pang, and many a throe,
Keen recollection's direful train,
Must wring my soul, ere Phœbus, low,
Shall kiss the distant western main.

And when my nightly couch I try,
Sore harass'd out with care and grief,
My toil-beat nerves, and tear-worn eye,
Keep watchings with the nightly thief:
Or if I slumber, fancy, chief,
Reigns, haggard-wild, in sore affright:
Ev'n day, all-bitter, brings relief
From such a horror-breathing night.

O thou bright queen, who, o'er th' expanse
Now highest reign'st with boundless sway!
Oft has thy silent-marking glance
Observ'd us, fondly-wand'ring, stray!
The time, unheeded, sped away,
While love's luxurious pulse beat high,
Beneath thy silver-gleaming ray,
To mark the mutual-kindling eye.

Oh! scenes in strong remembrance set!
Scenes, never, never to return!
Scenes, if in stupor I forget,
Again I feel, again I burn!
From every joy and pleasure torn,
Life's weary vale I 'll wander through;
And hopeless, comfortless, I 'll mourn
A faithless woman's broken vow!

DESPONDENCY—AN ODE.*

Oppress'd with grief, oppress'd with care,
A burden more than I can bear,
I set me down and sigh;
O life! thou art a galling load,
Along a rough, a weary road,
To wretches such as I!
Dim-backward as I cast my view,
What sick'ning scenes appear!
What sorrows yet may pierce me through,
Too justly I may fear!
Still caring, despairing,
Must be my bitter doom;
My woes here shall close ne'er
But with the closing tomb!

Happy! ye sons of busy life,
Who, equal to the bustling strife,
No other view regard!
Ev'n when the wished end's denied,
Yet while the busy means are plied,
They bring their own reward:

* The three preceding poems all allude to the unfortunate affair with Jean Armour.—See Life.

Whilst I, a hope-abandon'd wight,
Unfitted with an aim,
Meet ev'ry sad returning night,
And joyless morn, the same!
You, bustling and justling,
Forget each grief and pain;
I, listless, yet restless,
Find ev'ry prospect vain.

How blest the solitary's lot,
Who, all-forgetting, all-forgot,
Within his humble cell—
The cavern, wild with tangling roots—
Sits o'er his newly-gather'd fruits,
Beside his crystal well!
Or haply, to his ev'ning thought,
By unfrequented stream,
The ways of men are distant brought,
A faint, collected dream;
While praising, and raising
His thoughts to heav'n on high,
As wand'ring, meand'ring,
He views the solemn sky.

Than I, no lonely hermit plac'd
Where never human footstep trac'd,
Less fit to play the part;
The lucky moment to improve,
And just to stop, and just to move,
With self-respecting art:
But ah! those pleasures, loves, and joys,
Which I too keenly taste,
The solitary can despise—
Can want, and yet be blest!
He needs not, he heeds not,
Or human love or hate;
Whilst I here must cry here
At perfidy ingrate!

O enviable early days,
When dancing thoughtless pleasure's maze,
To care, to guilt unknown!
How ill exchang'd for riper times,
To feel the follies, or the crimes,
Of others, or my own!
Ye tiny elves that guiltless sport,
Like linnets in the bush,
Ye little know the ills ye court,
When manhood is your wish!
The losses, the crosses,
That active man engage;
The fears all, the tears all,
Of dim declining Age!

TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ., MAUCHLINE,

(RECOMMENDING A BOY).

I HOLD it, sir, my bounden duty
To warn you how that Master Tootie,*
Alias, Laird M'Gaun,
Was here to hire yon lad away
'Bout whom ye spak the tither day,
And wad hae done 't aff han':
But lest he learn the callan tricks—
An' faith I muckle doubt him—
Like scrapin' out auld Crummie's nicks
An' tellin' lies about them;
As lieve, then, I 'd have, then,
Your clerkship he should sair,
If sae be ye may be
Not fitted otherwhere.

Although I say 't, he 's gleg enough,
An' 'bout a house that 's rude and rough
The boy might learn to swear;
But then wi' you he 'll be sae taught,
An' get sic fair example straught,
I hae na ony fear.
Ye 'll catechise him every quirk,
And shore him weel wi' hell;
An' gar him follow to the kirk—
Aye when ye gang yoursel'.
If ye, then, maun be, then,
Frae hame this comin' Friday;
Then please, sir, to leave, sir,
The orders wi' your lady.

My word of honour I hae gi'en,
In Paisley John's, that night at e'en,
To meet the warld's worm:
To try to get the twa to gree,
And name the airles an' the fee,
In legal mode an' form:
I ken he weel a snick can draw,
When simple bodies let him:
An' if a Devil be at a',
In faith he 's sure to get him.
To phrase you an' praise you,
Ye ken your Laureate scorns;
The prayer still, you share still,
Of grateful MINSTREL BURNS.

* "Master Tootie" then lived in Mauchline: a dealer in cows. It was his practice often to cut the nicks or markings from the horns of cattle, to disguise their age.

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